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ABSTRACT

An evaluation of the second year of services of the Massachusetts Adult Education with Homeless Persons Project documented different program models evolving out of diversely defined partnerships between adult education organizations and shelters for homeless people. Site visits to all nine programs and subsequent profiles were supplemented with learner surveys and interviews. Four themes identified in the Year 1 evaluation continued to define the goals and operations of the programs in the project: partnership, curriculum and teaching methods, teacher training, and transition. The "typical" learner was a young (under 25) white single mother of one or two children who was newly homeless, saw education as a way out, who would not be enrolled in an education program if it were not provided as part of shelter services, and was very pleased with the quality of instruction. (Program profiles that comprise over 100 pages of the report follow the findings summaries. The nine profiles offer a "snapshot" of each program's unique approach to adult education for the homeless. A statistical profile is followed by a program profile that includes: (1) a program summary (history and context, need, vision and goals, distinguishing characteristics, strengths, concerns and tensions); (2) program design and implementation; and (3) recommendations. The report concludes with recommendations related to the four themes and several other issues. Appendixes include learner profiles and survey and site visit protocols.) (YLB)

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ED350424

# "Finding Myself; Finding My Home"

## An Evaluation of the Adult Education with Homeless Persons Project for the Massachusetts Department of Education, Bureau of Adult Education

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We thank all the Adult Education with Homeless Persons Project staff who spent many hours talking and thinking with the evaluation team. We thank the adult learners who agreed to participate in the Learner Survey, and whose honest assessment of their services center this evaluation in lived experience.

We also thank the Stone Center, Wellesley College, whose support support made this work possible.

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# Preface

*"I didn't get an education as a kid. I just didn't get into it. I was always on the run. But now I really want it. I've got these little girls that need me, that need their father. And I need me."*

*"I really want to get a job and continue to work in the program. The work experience program is giving me responsibility and and I'm learning to handle people better. I'm looking forward to having a home for myself and my daughter very soon ."*

*"I really want to get my GED because I want to get into college, and counselling and maybe childcare."*

*"I would just like to stay in this program."*

*"I want to thank everybody for making it easy for me to go to school and supporting me. And I hope this program stays just as successful as it is now. Thank you!"*

*"The educational program is an excellent program and it is needed very much. Alot of women don't have a very good school background and would like to change that, and by having this program they can. It makes you feel better about yourself."*

*"I am studying hard for my GED diploma."*

*"For one, this program is helping me alot. I'm learning. I like what I am doing. I hope I finish so that I can make my mother proud-- and myself. I need the education. I appreciate the time and the patience the teachers put up with to help me the best they can."*

*"This program did so much for so many teens-- and for me." This is a good opportunity for a young mother."*

*"I'm learning how to benefit for myself along with helping my children get a better education, and deal with life in general-- because it is a necessity to get a good education and to strive to do the best that I can."*

*"Yes, I would like to, when I get settled, to still be in this program, because it is very helpful to me. My tutor is very understanding to me, and that's what I need to get through this program."*

*"I think you should please help us keep this program together, and with more things to learn with. Thank you very much."*

*"That is great program and helps alot to learn and speak very well."*

*"I want to thank you for the opportunity to give my personal opinion about the Learning Center. I recognize it like an effort to help us and our homeless situation. There I met other people and, even when somebody left the program, we still being friends. The approach between each other is very important for me. In that program I learned to trust the country. Now I love more the Americans. Now I think there are people with concerns of the same kind, like any other human being."*

*"I like the program because it gives me a better chance to learn more, and after I get my GED I would like to take a course in record keeping and accounting."*

*"I like the program very much and I hope to get a job after I get my GED."*

*"I think the program is very informative and there should be more programs like this one for people who have a hard time learning when there are other individuals around. I know have enough potential to increase my educational and academic skills."*

*"Since I started this program I can see how many persons are out there waiting to be friends and how many things I still have to do in my life."*

*"The shelter I was accepted at helped me change my life. If it weren't available, I hate to think of what my life would be like. Without this educational program, I would find it very difficult to crawl out of the welfare pit. I hope to become one person who can make a difference for myself, my children, and anyone I can offer help to along the way. Thank you sincerely!"*

# I. INTRODUCTION

Between November 1990 and July 1991, a six person evaluation team[1] conducted an evaluation of the second year of services (Year 2) of the Massachusetts Adult Education with Homeless Persons Project (the Project). The evaluation was conducted under the auspices of the Stone Center at Wellesley College for the Massachusetts Department of Education, Bureau of Adult Education. The evaluation had five purposes:

1.) to document the different program models which are evolving out of diversely defined partnerships between adult education organizations and shelters for homeless people across the Commonwealth;
2.) to broadly assess whether these programs are the appropriate vehicle for engaging people who are homeless in the adult education system
3.) to provide program staff with the opportunity to reflect on the development of their program with the assistance of an outside evaluator;
4.) through structured surveys and interviews, to engage shelter guests in assessing the meaning and impact of the education services which are offered to them in conjunction with shelter services; and
5.) to make recommendations to the Massachusetts Bureau of Adult Education about the future development of the Project.

The Project is funded by the Stewart J. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act, a federal effort to provide services to homeless people nationwide. In FY '87, in response to increasing public awareness of the need for literacy education, Congress earmarked a relatively small percentage of the McKinney Act monies for literacy services. These discretionary literacy funds come directly to the states. The general guidelines for their use encourage experimentation and model development at the local level. With its history of support for learner centered methods in adult education and for developing demonstration/ partnership programs between agencies who are new to each other, the Massachusetts Bureau of Adult Education was well positioned to design a model education project to offer education services to people living in shelters. There were four programs in the project in Year 1. The number increased to nine in Year 2.

The nine program partnerships in Year 2 and their target populations are:

1.) Bridge Over Troubled Waters (Boston) targets youth.
2.) Cambridge Community Learning Center/Cambridge YWCA targets families.
3.) Catholic Charities of Worcester/Catholic Charities, Youville House (Worcester) targets families.
4.) Community Action, Inc./Transitional Housing for Women and Children and Salisbury Homeless Shelter (Haverhill) targets families.
5.) Greater Lawrence YWCA and the Adult Learning Center/Daybreak Shelter Lawrence targets adult recovering alcoholics.
6.) Literacy Volunteers of Massachusetts/Long Island Shelter (Boston) targets adults.
7.) Operation Bootstrap/Lynn Shelter Association (Lynn) targets families.
8.) SCALE/College Avenue Adult Shelter (Somerville) targets adults.
9.) The Literacy Project/Greenfield and Athol-Orange Family Inns (Greenfield and Athol) targets families.

This report presents the findings of the Year 2 Evaluation.of the Massachusetts Adult Education with Homeless Persons Project. The report is divided into four sections: 1.) Overview of Evaluation Findings; 2.) Results of the Learner Survey; 3.) Program Profiles; and 4.) Recommendations. Learner profiles, examples of learners' work, and copies of the protocols used for the learner survey and program site visits are included in the appendices.

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[1] Laura Sperazi, Mary Jo Connelly, Amy Knudsen, Mary Turtle, Mindy Fried, and Alice Oberfield

Before we fully report the results of the evaluation studies in the conventional language of the social sciences, we want to convey descriptively some of our most important learnings. These learnings are inspired not only by the large amount of data we collected during the formal evaluation but also by our casual conversations and encounters with homeless people and with each other during the evaluation process. These are the learnings which challenged our preconceptions about who homeless people are, how they become homeless, "what they need", and what education means to them. These are the learnings which ultimately shape our understanding of what it means-- and should mean-- to provide adult education services in conjunction with other shelter services. We will reference these learnings in the other sections of this report as we develop our analyses of the survey and site profile data. In this way, these learnings are the foundation of the report which we want to clarify, and invite the reader to engage with, at the beginning.

We owe the debt of these learnings to the women and men who described for us their experiences of homelessness and who expressed their vivid desires to resume their educations. We also owe the debt of these learnings to the shelter administrators, counselors, teachers, coordinators, tutors and volunteers who shared with us, with equal candor, the range of personal and bureaucratic challenges which they meet daily in order to provide the most enlightened services possible. The following learnings are addressed to learners and shelter and education providers and to their overlapping interests in providing education services to people who are homeless.

- Homeless people are not all the same
  The first learning is that homeless people are not all the same. Especially in late 20th century American usage, the English language has great power to reduce an extraordinarily diverse group of people to an anonymous, history-less, social service "population" by defining them in terms of where they sleep. The fact that "homeless people" are defined by where they sleep-- or spend their days-- does not mean that they have the same family histories, the same educational, religious or economic background, the same color skin, the same number of children, the same talents, goals, dreams or desires. In the world of social services for the homeless, stereotypes-- "the homeless" are "dirty," "dangerous," "unmotivated," "drug addicted," "schizophrenic," etc.-- encumber service delivery in the same way they do in other social service arenas, like welfare or drug treatment. Coping with the reality of homelessness is difficult enough. Fighting against the stigma of homelessness drains the precious energy that should be directed toward healing, mending, and building a better life. Understanding and appreciating the diversity of who homeless people are and how they become homeless allows program staff to work with an individual or family in its own terms to deliver the best possible services. Both the learner profiles in Appendix A and the discussion of demographics in the Learner Survey section of this report describe the variety of people the evaluation team encountered, and the variety of their needs.

- The shared experience of disconnection
  Despite their diversity, there is something which people who are homeless share. They share the experience of radical disconnection from the social systems which usually bind, support and nurture individuals and families through hard times. Homeless people fall through the webbed net of connections with near and distant family, old and new friends, co-workers, religious group members, political associates, etc., the net which many of us who are not homeless take for granted and which would catch and protect us should we fall. Even if a young family, for example, is homeless for only a few weeks, they experience the deep isolation and stigma of having nowhere to turn but the state. Within

this experience of radical disconnection from the social systems and communities which typically support people in need, what role can adult education services play to help people rebuild-- or build for the first time-- the systems and communities that will sustain them? The results of this evaluation suggest that education services can play a pivotal role in this building/rebuilding process.

- Highlights the concerns and tensions in traditional ways of thinking about adult education

This context of diversity of the learner group and common need for connection, however, highlights concerns and tensions within the field of adult education about what adult education services can do, should do, and how to do it. This context:

1.) suggests that a complete educational plan for a person who is homeless should incorporate a highly individualized instructional program, based on the goals the learner presents, within the long-term framework of building/rebuilding relationships and connections with people and systems;

2.) defines "learner empowerment," a worthy but sometimes elusive-- and even "shop-worn"-- goal of the adult education system, 1.) in terms of building up one's connections to family, friends, institutional support systems, etc., as one develops greater clarity and authority about ones' own personal history and goals; and 2.) developing critical perspectives on the social systems which define our options and choices.

3.) suggests that building self-esteem is a primary goal of adult education with homeless people, not an ancillary outcome. Self esteem is the foundation on which to build a new life of connection and sufficiency;

4.) requires an examination of what "participatory" methods really mean in the adult education setting with people who are homeless. While the classroom is, for any learner, a laboratory in which to explore new learnings and behaviors, the adult education classroom or tutorial for a learner who is homeless is a place to model and test a new way of presenting oneself in the world-- as confident and connected;

5.) suggests the importance of peer teaching and developing peer group identity in the instructional setting as an adjunct to (or, in some cases, in lieu of) the more typical individualized 1::1 teacher or tutor model;

6.) suggests that genuinely enabling relationships in the instructional setting will challenge traditional definitions of "teacher" and "tutor" with their boundaries between teachers and learners and will move toward a role of teacher/counselor where the teacher appropriately engages with the whole person;

7.) questions the value of traditional GED classes as an important goal of adult education with people who are homeless unless teachers actively probe with their learners what getting the GED signifies for them, as well as what it represents in reality; and

8.) actively facilitates "finding myself and my home" so that the cycle of disconnection and homelessness is broken, and the social problem called homelessness is diminished.

- Special challenges for teachers, tutors and administrators

It can be challenging and even frightening for shelter workers, teachers, tutors and administrators to witness and engage a high degree of disconnection among their learners. Engaging this degree of disconnection can challenge service providers deeply because it requires an examination of one's own assumptions about how social systems work and why they fail. And because it can challenge conceptions of "professional identity" and "professional boundaries". At a time when the federal government will have to pay 500 billion dollars to bail out the financially and morally bankrupt Savings and Loans, when, despite our national wealth, we have the highest rate of infant mortality among the industrialized nations and one of the lowest literacy rates, shelter counselors, teachers and tutors who work with homeless people are asked to face another indicator of how the American promise of the good life for all does not deliver: increasing numbers of poor and homeless people in cities, towns, and rural areas across the nation who need increasingly more comprehensive services.

A lead article in the Boston Globe on July 2 of this year, on the American "crisis of confidence" quoted Boston University professor Donald Kanter in his new book The Cynical Americans. Kanter says:

> "In citizen and country alike, there seems to be a loss of faith in people and in the very concept of community."

Learning providers in partnerships with shelters for the homeless now work with the people who suffer that loss in the concept-- and reality-- of community most deeply. But there is a sense of dedication and vocation among many providers of adult education services that keeps them working with low pay, little recognition, and little job security, in the face of complex demands. Teachers, tutors and administrators need education and mutual support systems comparable to what is offered to learners in the adult education classroom to foster maximum learning and maximum results for all. Shelter staff are also in line for training about adult education practices and how to integrate educational services more fully into the ongoing life of the shelter.

- Massachusetts is a leader in this field

  While many social service professionals in the Commonwealth today despair about the impact of massive cuts in social services on real peoples' lives and about their own ability to make a living in human services, it is heartening that creative people continue to work with great focus on social programs like the Adult Education with Homeless Persons Project. With McKinney money fairly secure for the next two years (Senator Kennedy is now leading the fight to extend the McKinney Act beyond 1993), the demonstration effort in Massachusetts to create educational programs for people who are homeless is making-- and can look forward to making-- an extraordinary contribution to both the field of adult education and shelter services. Firmly rooted in the principles of learner centered adult education and interagency collaboration, at nine programs and counting, the Project is a small jewel of the Commonwealth's adult education system.

This evaluation report presents our findings with deep respect for the commitment and creativity of the many people involved in this venture. Our formative evaluation approach allows us to acknowledge the strengths of the current programs as well as to address their problems. We offer our praise and our criticisms in a supportive spirit and hope that our analysis and recommendations facilitate positive change.

# II. OVERVIEW OF THE FINDINGS

## Evaluation History and Methods

The method and analysis of the Year 2 evaluation of the Adult Education with the Homeless Project grows directly out of the methods and findings of the first year evaluation. The evaluation of the Project in its first year focused on the documentation of similarities and differences among the four emerging program models through the case study method. Evaluators conducted intensive two-day site visits to all programs and subsequently developed program profiles which described the program's goals, designs, methods of implementation and outcomes. The Year 1 report also identified four themes which emerged as critical to understanding the programs and the Project as they developed. These themes are:
1.) Partnership as cornerstone of the Project;
2.) Considering curriculum: the subject of homelessness and the question of gender;
3.) Key elements in program design, including teacher training; and
4.) Defining the long-term goal as "transition" to educational services beyond the shelter.

We purposely review these methods and findings from Year 1 because they shape how the evaluation was conducted this year. In Year 2, the evaluators, in concert with state Project administrators, decided to expand the site visits to all nine programs and to supplement the site visits and subsequent profiles with a learner survey and learner interviews. While observation of classes and tutorials, as well as group and individual learner interviews, were part of the Year 1 evaluation, there was general agreement that it was essential at this point in the Project's development to more directly and systematically involve the people who are receiving the service in the assessment of that service. With limited resources we were able to survey fifty-four women and men who participated in educational services offered through the nine participating shelters. Eighteen of the fifty-four were also interviewed. The methods for conducting the survey/interviews and site visits are fully described in subsequent sections of the report.

In this overview we return to the four themes identified in the Year 1 evaluation as critical to understanding the goals of the Project. These themes continue to define the goals and operations of the programs in the Project and, at the end of the second year, can be subjected to more thorough and critical analysis. Partnership, curriculum, teacher/tutor support, and the goal of "transition" are all described in detail in the program profiles on a program by program basis. In the profiles the reader will find what makes each program distinct, its particular philosophy of service delivery and change, and its unique joining of education with shelter services. The following summary describes generally the goals and "reach" of the Project, how the goals were or were not translated in the field, and makes suggestions for re-thinking the goals based on program experience.

## Partnership

In Years 1 and 2 the Project mandated with a few exceptions a one-to-one partnership between an adult education center and a homeless shelter or cluster of shelters. In this close relationship, participating agencies were cross-pollinated and produced a couple of hybrids: adult education centers which consider people who are homeless a community to be served, and shelters who entertain basic skills classes as essential services, not frilly add-ons. While this definition of partnership has generally limited the adult education center to serving one shelter, it has been an appropriate and positive way to develop mutual understanding thusfar. Adult education centers are developing a knowledge base about providing services in the shelter setting to homeless persons. And shelter providers are developing a knowledge base about the value and function of adult education for their guests. The adult education system has historically underserved homeless adults. The partnership process has been successful in linking two social service systems which were strangers to each other, and in raising consciousness about how to extend education services.

Within the one-to-one model, it has become evident that partnership is a living relationship between agencies with different histories, languages, priorities, and personalities. Agency philosophies regarding education, homelessness, empowerment, and social change may differ a little or alot. Some shelters are oriented towards moving an individual in and out of the system quickly, and are guided by strict internal regulations as well as state mandates regarding length of stay, and access to support services while in the shelter. Providing support for the guest may be less of a priority than providing physical shelter. The adult education center tends to be less regulation-driven and can, therefore, focus more on working at the learner's pace. Or the education center's strict rules about, for example, length of time sober and class attendance, might conflict with those of the shelter regarding sobriety and access to support services. Location of classes-- on-site or off-site-- can also be a sticking point in the agencies' partnerships. Furthermore, in some cases, the idea and the function of partnership are isolated at the administrative level and do not "trickle down" to the direct service workers-- teachers and shelter staff-- who are the key persons carrying out the programs. Without addressing partnership in a structural way, teachers and shelter staff are less able to establish a creative learning environment. Teachers feel the lack of support, and programs are limited in their scope.

These differences are felt in different ways and in different degrees by learners, administrators, teachers and tutors. In some programs the differences may lead to fundamental questions about the appropriateness of the "match" between agencies. In others, these differences are the rich ground out of which unity of purpose is growing. As a rule, however, learning providers have had to adjust their services for the homeless community, just as shelter staff have had to learn that they play a critical role both in supporting learner participation in classes and tutorials and in creating an atmosphere of continuous learning within the shelter.

It can make all the difference, for example, for a teacher to know that the young mother in her evening class is determined to get her GED because she "never wants to be homeless again." The teacher can help the learner to focus her determination with a long-term plan that will lead to classes at the local community college and, in this case, work as a professional photographer. Similarly, shelter staff are usually the first point of contact with the learner about the education program-- they often tell guests about the education service at intake-- and continue to provide encouragement throughout the period of the guest's involvement with the shelter and the education program.

With a growing understanding about how to deliver quality service, and maturing relationships among collaborating agencies, the Project can now question whether this model insures maximum participation of learners from shelters over time and the development of ever-heightened consciousness about the relevance of education services for people who are homeless within the adult education and shelter communities.

Planning for the continued success of the Project requires a reexamination of the model which has guided it in its development phase. There are not enough adult education centers to pair one-on-one with all the shelters in the state, nor would this strategy be the most efficient in the long run. But adult education centers which are developing expertise in delivering services to shelters can expand their services to other shelters, building on what they have learned in their experimental partnerships. An adult education center can designate a coordinator for homeless services, for example, and work with representatives from several shelters to design programs best suited to the needs of guests in those shelters. The coordinator can work with shelter representatives to determine whether classes are best conducted on-site or off-site, set up daycare services if needed, run workshops for shelter counselors on how to create an environment of continuous learning in the shelter, etc. In this way, the adult education coordinator for services to homeless people becomes a resource to shelters. When centers can extend their services in this way, people who are homeless will truly be a community served by the system.

We are not suggesting that there is only one model for delivering educational services through the shelter. In fact, expanding what partnership means should diversify the models which are developing within the Project. Similarly, we understand that it takes funding to implement this expansion of services and do not suggest that already overworked staff simply take on more work. Nonetheless, at this critical point in the evolution of the Project, lack of funds should not interfere with thinking about and planning for maximum program effectiveness.

## Curriculum and Teaching Methods

Teaching or tutoring someone who is homeless is a critical encounter with a person in a time of dramatic transition. In this charged relationship, even seasoned teachers ask: "What should I teach and how should I teach it? And beyond these questions lies another related question: How should teachers and tutors be instructed themselves in order to both meet the needs of their learners and to maintain continuity of the learning process from teacher/tutor training through to what happens in the classroom? First, we look at concerns about curriculum and teaching methods for learners and then at what these concerns imply for teacher-learner relationships and for teacher training.

It is hard to compare different programs when there is so much variation among them. Nonetheless, we found that the majority of the curricula tend to focus on the adult education product, not process. While there is a general understanding about how working towards the GED and on basic skills can empower learners-- the joy that adult learners convey when they begin to learn is infectious-- getting the GED or enhancing basic skills tend to be seen as ends in themselves. And while learners and teachers/tutors agree that increased self-esteem and learner empowerment are significant outcomes of program participation, curricula, in general, are not consciously fuelled by the goal to enhance self-esteem and confident action through self-knowledge.

Over three quarters-- 75.9% -- of the survey respondents say that they want to get a GED. The degree of consensus about what these adult learners say they want requires us to question what getting the GED means to the learners themselves, and what it means in reality. Do learners believe that once they get the GED they will be "educated"? Do they believe they'll get a better job or a job to begin with? Do they believe they will have the skills to go to college or enroll in a training program? What job can a learner get today with a GED that s/he can't get without one? (These are questions which a subsequent survey could ask.) Most of the learning providers have taught to the GED for many years and have established methods for preparing learners to take the test. What is not so clear among the providers is how to fully integrate their basic skills/GED curricula with the meaning systems of their learners.

In Year 2, providers agree that the subject of homelessness is a legitimate component of a curriculum. While providers do not believe that there is a need for a "special curriculum" just for people who are homeless, homelessness is a real and defining part of life for a period of time in learners' lives, a part that warrants examination. If the curriculum is learner driven, it is likely that learners will bring the subject of homelessness to the table. Learner centered doesn't require, however, that new materials have to be developed each time a learner brings up a subject. A system for sharing inventive curricula on, for example, the meaning of social stigma, dealing with landlords and leases, negotiating the welfare and medicaid systems, evaluating childcare services, etc. is needed.

The Project serves a very diverse learner group. Providers agree that curriculum needs vary depending on the group served. Many of the learners are young, white single mothers who are newly homeless; some are women of color; some are older men, Black and white, with years of homelessness behind them, and boys new to the streets. Ideally, a curriculum for the young, single mother who is homeless for the first time, if it is designed to match her real needs, will be different from the curriculum for the older man with a history of substance abuse. In general, the Project has a sophisticated understanding of curricula tailored to distinct groups needs, but it has not translated that understanding into actual materials. Neither has it refined ways of cultivating group identity and peer support through creative use of curricula and group methods, or integrated issues of gender and race into class/tutorial materials.

These things are being done in other programs in the state. One example is a multicultural program for teen mothers designed to build self-confidence and self-value through "nurturing mutuality." In this program, the development of a sense of self through collaborative writing is seen as a precursor to individual writing and task-directed assignment writing in a school setting. Based on Dr. Jean Baker Miller's developmental theories of the psychology of women, this program is offered to a small number of women under the auspices of the Community Adolescent Resource and Education Center (CARE) in Holyoke, MA. In an unpublished paper, "Learning to Help One Another: the Writing Connection," Sara Dalmas Jonsberg describes the essential relationship between group support and individual growth for young mothers. The Project would benefit from learning about efforts like these which explore the relationship between group and individual learning.

A shift from using the word "curriculum" (denoting a fixed set of learnings which are product oriented) to "materials" and "learning activities" could help to facilitate a more learner centered and meaning based approach to GED and basic skills instruction. Similarly, mixing both group and individual instruction can take the pressure off having to choose between one method or the other. A balance between individualized instruction and group instruction/support may bring about maximum effect. The LVM program at Long Island Shelter inadvertently developed this dual method when it offered a learning group to guests waiting for a tutor. The group is not a substitute for the tutorial but it is a supplement to the tutorial where people question and learn together.

Many adult educators may agree about the value of a process oriented curriculum, but a process oriented curriculum goes against the grain of the state's welfare and employment training policies which are increasingly performance driven. Providers will be increasingly under pressure to define for themselves what success for their learners and guests really means, the role that learner centered curriculum and methods play in bringing about that success, and to convey this to their funding sources.

### The Teacher/Learner Relationship and the Need for Teacher/Tutor/Staff Training

Adult learners who are homeless often bring their problems into the classroom in search of support. In the "whole learner" driven classroom or tutorial, this is an accepted, welcome, if occasionally problematic, occurrence. With learners who are homeless, teachers and tutors are sometimes asked to engage with difficult personal problems which bring up deep emotions, and bonds of a certain kind of friendship are formed. For some educators it is a given that learners bring their problems to their teachers. It is sometimes not so easy for shelter staff to accept the intimacy, or what might be perceived as the crossing of a professional boundary. Similarly, teachers might wonder what shelter staff know about education and question their commitment to the education program.

Professional boundary issues are bound to surface in new partnership programs where roles are being tested. Other permutations have to do with the restrictions which teachers and shelter staff impose on themselves because they are not the "experts" in homelessness or education, or because they are uncomfortable with the added responsibility. In programs where these issues arise and are resolved, resolution comes with a mutual focus on the whole person who is in need of service. With this focus the teacher necessarily assumes a counseling-like role and shelter staff become educators interested in creating a supportive environment for learning at home in the shelter-- and even in supplementing what the teacher/tutor does in class.

In order to perform this more expanded version of education and providing shelter services, teachers and shelter staff need training and support from administration and from each other to explore and define their non-traditional functions. Current training and support is very limited.

We typically think that training means showing someone how to perform a task-- imparting the technique, as opposed to teaching someone how to think about the best ways to perform a task. The former approach is product oriented; the latter process oriented. If teachers and tutors in their classrooms and tutorials want to help their learners learn how to learn-- that is, engage them in the process of defining what they want and need to learn and then figure out how to learn it-- teachers and tutors must experience that process, and be the beneficiaries of that process themselves. Seen in this way, "empowerment" is not just a "homeless issue" but a goal for teachers, too.

This is the necessary symmetry of the genuinely learner centered classroom: the teacher/tutor cannot empower the learner to do something that s/he is not doing for him/herself. Providing opportunities for teachers to examine their own attitudes about the goals and methods of the adult education system, about homeless and poor people and what "they need," and about their own experiences of power/powerlessness, is a real starting point for effective and empowering education between teachers, tutors and homeless adults. When teachers are engaged in the process, they will automatically engage their learners.

In the short time that learners are in the program, teachers have the opportunity to affect them deeply in the present and to open doors to greater involvement in the learning process in the future. This is a function that shelter workers have a critical role in supporting. But teachers and shelter staff need support too. They are the invisible service groups in this Project whose relationships with clients play a major role in shaping the learner's potential for successful change.

## Transition

Because of the nature of the educational service-- typically a short exposure during a crisis period-- establishing educational continuity and contact for learners after they leave the shelter has been thought of as a key to the success of the Project. Long term educational planning for people whose contact with the adult education system will necessarily be bound by length of stay in a shelter, as well as by the myriad concerns they must cope with during a period of homelessness, seeks to insure a clear path into receiving sustained services.

The Year 1 evaluation suggested that the goal of transition be integrated into all aspects of program planning and implementation, including letting learners know that this is a goal of the program. We will review how programs in general view the goal of transition, how they do or do not implement it, what transition should and should not mean, and new ways of helping programs build in this critical component.

There are two kinds of transition. After a learner leaves the shelter s/he may continue taking classes or tutorials at the same center or with the same person as before. Or a learner may be "transitioned" to another adult education center or move on to a training program, college classes, etc. Currently, transition is a problem for all programs. While there may be sporadic follow-up with clients, no consistent, reliable structure has been established to implement ongoing contact with former guests that sustains a long-term view for learner involvement. Program staff may agree that the idea of continuity and transition of services is important, maybe even central to the Project, but the idea has not been structurally integrated into the thinking of the programs at every level.

In some cases, this is because learners leave the area after they leave the shelter. Without transportation back to the learning center, learners cannot continue classes. Sometimes learners are so busy with building other parts of their lives that education slips to the bottom of their priorities, and programs have no outreach workers to help the former learners stay connected to the education network. As a rule, programs are not even developing group identity/coherence among learners that can be an incentive for maintaining contact with each other, if not with the center. This is due to the relatively small number of learners and their quick movement through the education system as much as it is to not thinking about the relationship between group cohesiveness and the transition goal.

Some programs raised important questions about measuring the success of their educational services in terms of transition or continuity beyond the shelter. They argued that making an informed decision to transfer out of class or tutorial and into a drug treatment or other support program is a positive step for some learners who may use the classroom or tutorial as a way to clarify their needs, goals and plans. This argument reflects the extent to which some programs have integrated learner goals into the center of their services. It also represents a refined notion of what transition means: transition to the network, or program, or set of supports which a learners identifies as the right next step. We are not arguing that transition to another education program only be set as a kind of performance criteria.

Learner interest in and motivation to stay connected after leaving the shelter is substantial. Survey data indicates that 63% of the learners want to learn more. Nearly 90% said they want to continue their education after leaving the shelter. Whether they will or not depends on the intention and capacity of programs to make educational continuity and plans for transition a priority.

In order to build program capacity for developing transition goals for learners, outside (non-state) funding could be accessed to create a pool of "travelling" educational advocates or "ombudspeople" to work on development of transition plans with programs for guests leaving shelters, facilitate support of program and education center staff and to advocate for the educational needs of individual learners and the program as a whole. These positions would be staffed by former guests and learners and therefore would act as a career ladder or spiral for guests after they leave the shelter

# III. RESULTS OF THE LEARNER SURVEY

## Background and Methodology

Although guests and learners had been included in site visit interviews and group discussions as part of the Year 1 evaluation, these relatively informal data gathering opportunities did not provide a systematic way to query and compare learners across programs. The information was instructive but impressionistic. And it was difficult to cultivate a sense of ownership of the evaluation among the learners-- a sense that participating in an evaluation could make a difference to service delivery-- when contact was limited and relatively unstructured.

To avoid a similar gap in Year 2, all charged with the oversight, management and evaluation of the programs agreed that learners' perspectives on the quality and meaning of their services should be one focus of the current evaluation. A learner's survey would systematically gather and evaluate learners' responses to participating in an education program which is delivered in conjunction with shelter services. What better way to investigate the results of participating in a pilot project than to survey the participants themselves and to follow up the survey with interviews with selected learners? What better way to build learner investment in the evaluation than to understand it as a vehicle for learners opinions to be heard and hopefully taken into account by providers and policy makers?

## The Survey and Interview Questionnaires [1]

In early winter 1990, the evaluators drafted a sample learner questionnaire which was sent to all program staff. At a regular monthly "network" meeting, teachers, shelter staff, and other administrative staff reviewed and made suggestions for revising the survey. The evaluators revised the questionnaire taking into account concerns about accuracy of focus, privacy, length, language level, and format. The evaluators then sent out copies of the revised questionnaire for further review and solicited comments by mail and phone. The questionnaire was revised one last time on the basis of this feedback. The survey was also re-drafted as an "interview" questionnaire (the same questions formatted with more space for the interviewer to write-in answers.)

It was agreed in early winter that, given the small evaluation staff and limited resources, teachers would administer the survey as part of class activity. While there was some concern among the providers that learners' responses might somehow be compromised in a survey administered by a trusted teacher-- "They won't want to criticize the program with their teacher" was the typical expression of this concern-- the group eventually resolved itself to teacher involvement.[2] One part of the resolution about teacher involvement came from the understanding that the survey was to be presented as an "empowering" experience -- an opportunity for learners to express opinions that would be reported in a document read by education providers and policy makers. It was also understood that subsequent evaluations would conduct learner surveys with additional evaluation staff, not with teachers.

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[1] Copies of the learner survey, interview questionnaire, and teacher training notes are included in Appendix B.

[2] There was one exception to this rule. At the Lynn Shelter Association there was no teacher available to conduct the survey within the prescribed time and, therefore, one of the evaluators conducted the survey.

The target number of learners for the survey was one hundred-- twelve to fifteen in each of nine programs. The target number of interviews was eighteen-- two per program. Interviews would be conducted only with learners who had completed the survey. Teachers were asked to choose the interviewees on the basis of comfort speaking with an interviewer and their representation of the learner group as a whole.

Fifty-four learners completed the survey and eighteen were interviewed.
The survey and interviews were completed during a two week period in mid May. This means that the survey was conducted only once in each program with learners who were currently enrolled or with learners who had continuing contact with the program even if they were not still attending class on a full time basis. Conducting the survey only once in each program limited the number of participants. This survey should be viewed as a pilot study which identifies questions and themes which can be more systematically studied in subsequent evaluations.

Except for the case studies which are included as a separate section of this report (see Appendix A ), the interview data is not reported separately from the survey data. However, the interview data does provide a context for interpreting the survey data. In the following sections of the report, as a rule, the results of the survey are first reported in summary fashion along with some interpretation that bears on service delivery, followed by straightforward reporting of numbers and percentages of response. As a rule, we will report differences of 10%- 15% or more among respondents as significant.

## Survey Results

The picture of the "typical" learner in the Project which emerges from the survey data is a young (under 25) white single mother of one or two children from Massachusetts who is newly homeless (within the last year), who sees education-- specifically training in math and getting the GED-- as a way out of the humiliating condition of homelessness, who would not be enrolled in an education program if it were not provided as part of shelter services, and who needs continued support to see her dreams of an independent life become a reality. This typical learner is very pleased with the quality of instruction offered to her and values her relationship with her instructor and the changes in her own self image-- she is more confident now about her ability to learn-- as much as she values her improvement in actual skills like reading and math.

While this "typical" picture from our limited data base corresponds with the trend throughout the Commonwealth for increasing numbers of young mothers to become homeless, this is not the whole picture either of who is homeless or who is utilizing education services within the Project. The following presentation of survey data is intended to describe the range of learners and learners' needs within the study and to thereby point the direction for further program development and improvement of service.

## A. Who are the Learners?

> *"I've been caught in this trap ever since I had my first child-- being on welfare-- and it goes back further than that. I was raised in foster homes and I'm from a mother who was on welfare. On and on..So, somehow I just was never able to crawl out of a poverty level, and now I really want to change that for myself and for my children. I don't want to have to worry where the next pair of shoes is coming from. I don't want to have to ever be in a shelter again because I had to leave somewhere and didn't have the money to afford another place to live. I think one of the most depressing things is to just not be able to get out of the hole you're in-- not have enough to eat and to clothe and shelter yourself. I mean, I don't want a lot, but I certainly do want to have the basics and I want that for my children. You know, I remember standing in welfare lines when I was a kid, and to have us be in that situation- myself with my children-- is devastating, and the only way that I can ever imagine changing that is to acquire an education to be able to make a decent living. That's the simplest: 1+1=2, right?"*

### Gender, Length of Time in Program, Age, Race and Ethnicity

**In this sample, women outnumber men by a third.** The total number of respondents in the learner survey is 54; 35 or 64.8% are women and 19 or 35.2% are men. Most learners-- 22 or 40.7%-- had been enrolled for four to eight weeks at the time the survey was conducted. But 8 or 14.8% had been enrolled for nine to twelve weeks, and 10 learners had been enrolled over twelve weeks, bringing to **a total of 74% those who had been enrolled for more than four weeks.** Eleven or 20.4% had been enrolled one to three weeks. Only 3 or 5.6% had been enrolled under a week at the time the survey was conducted. In general, learners who responded to the survey had had sustained contact with teachers and with the Project.

**The women are younger than the men:** 21 or 60% of the women are under 25 years of age and 14 or 40% are over 25. **Of those under 25, 11 or 31.4% are under 20. This means that close to a third of all the women learners are under 20 years of age.** Of the 14 women over 25, 8 or 22.9% are between 26 and 35; and 6 or 17.1% are over 36 years old. In contrast, 8 or 42.1% of the men are under 25; but only 3 or 15.8% of the men are under 20. Eleven men or 57.9% are over 26, with 7 of these-- 36.8% of the total number of men-- over 36. The women clearly tend to be younger than the men.

**A little more than half of the learners are white; almost a quarter are Hispanic; and almost a quarter are African-American or "other."** Twenty- eight or 51.9% of the total learners are white; 13 or 24.1% are Hispanic; 9 or 16.7% are African-American; and 4 or 7.4% are "other." "Other" means Korean, Asian Indian, Haitian, and Native American Indian. Portuguese and Italians who identified themselves as such are included as white.

**The largest group served is white women (19 or 35.2% of the total) followed by Hispanic women and white men-- 9 or 16.7% in each group. These are followed by African-American men-- 6 or 11.1%; Hispanic men--4 or 7.4%; and African-American women--3 or 5.6%. All the "others" are women.**

The data on race, gender and age together demonstrate that, generally speaking, the young group is female and white and that the older group is male and African-American. The mid-range is Hispanic women.

The age, race and gender configurations alone raise large issues about the kind of education services which are appropriate for young women vs. older men, and how/if education services should address racial/ethnic identity concerns like racism, discrimination, learning cross cultures and bi-lingualism, and gender concerns like sex education, sexual abuse, battery, the meaning of education and empowerment for women-- as well as the places where issues of racial/ethnic identity cross paths with gender empowerment issues.

### Country and State of Origin

**The Project is primarily serving Americans who were born and raised in the United States and not new immigrants.** Almost three quarters of the learners-- 39 or 72.2%-- have lived in the United States since birth. Another 6-- 11.1% have lived in the United States over ten years. Another 4-- 7.4%-- have lived in the United States over 5 years and two others-- 3.7%-- over one year. At the time the survey was completed, only 1 learner had lived in the United States 6 months to a year; and 2-- 3.7%-- had lived in the United States under six months.

Similarly, the Project is primarily serving a group of people who have lived in Massachusetts since birth or for over ten years. Twenty of the learners-- 37%-- have lived in Massachusetts since birth and 16--29.6% have lived here for more than ten years. This means that two thirds of the respondent group can be considered native (residing over 10 years) Bay Staters. Another 9-- 16.7%-- have lived here between 1 and 5 years. At the time they completed the survey, 4 others--7.4%-- had lived here six months to a year; and 5-- 9.3%-- had lived here under six months. Of these 5, 3 are white and 2 are Hispanic.

Open-ended data on place of birth yielded the following information on the various birthplaces of the learners: Massachusetts, 24-- 44.2%-- (conflicting somewhat with the responses to the previous question where 20 respondents reported having lived in Massachusetts since birth); Puerto Rico, 8; North Carolina, 2; and New York, 2. One person comes from each of the following places: Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Indiana, Idaho, Georgia, Michigan, New Hampshire, Illinois, Oregon, Kentucky, Dominican Republic, Korea, Haiti, Paraguay, Trinidad, and Calcutta. One person listed USA as place of birth.

### Marital Status

**The group is primarily single and primarily single young women.** Thirty five or 66% of the total learner group is single; 21-- 39.6% of the total single learners-- are women and 14 -- 26.4%-- are men. Four respondents or 7.5% are married, 3 women and 1 man. Seven women-- 13.2%-- are separated. Three men and 2 women are divorced, bringing the total of divorced respondents to 9.4%. One woman is widowed. Only one man reported his status as "living together." Twenty-three or 43.4% of the total number of respondents are single and under 25 years of age. Sixteen or 59.3% of the total of 27 white female respondents are single.

### Children

**The learners are parents, but it is only the women who are caring for their children and their children are young.** Forty one of the learners-- 75.9%-- have children: 32 or 91.4% of the total number of the women, and 9 or 16.7% of the total number of the men. This means that only 3 of the 34 women learners do not have children. Most mothers have one or two children. Eleven mothers have just 1 child; 13 have 2 children; 8 have more than 3 children; six men have 1 child; one man has 2 children and two men have more than 3 children.

The children tend to be young. Of the total 32 women who have children, **26-- 84.1%-- have children two years of age or younger. But 17 women also have children between the ages of 3 and 8** Twenty nine-- 90.3%-- have children living with them. Three women do not have their children with them but are trying to get them back from DSS. No man has children living with him.

### Relationship to the Shelter

**At the time the survey was conducted, 26 or 48.1% of the learners were living in shelters.** Another 11 or 20.4% were living in their own apartments. Others were evenly distributed among rooming houses, friends, family and unspecified other. Only one person was living on the streets. In the six months prior to responding to the survey, 19 or 35.2% of the learners were living in shelters; 12 or 22.2% were living in their own apartments, and 17 others-- 31.5%-- were (evenly distributed) living with family or friends. Only 3 were in a hotel/motel; 1 was in a rooming house and 1 was living on the streets.

**The learners tend to be newly homeless.** In response to the question: "If you are living in a shelter, is this the first shelter you've lived in?", **34 or 63% of 42 learners (12 missing data) answered yes, this was their first time in a shelter.** Percentages do not differ noticeably across gender and race, except that this was the first use of a shelter by 100% of the Hispanic respondents (compared to 88.9% for African-Americans and 72.7% for whites), indicating just how new homelessness is to Hispanic people in this sample. There is further evidence of how new homelessness is to this group. For 23 or 42.6% of the total respondents, the first use of any shelter occurred within the six months prior to answering the survey. Only seventeen or 31.5% used a shelter for the first time more than two years prior to the date of answering the survey.

The main reason learners gave for leaving their last permanent home was "family problems"-- 22 or 40.7% of the total. The highest reporting of this reason comes from the under-twenty group, where 8 out of the 10 learners who answered this question-- or 80%-- said that they left their last permanent home for family reasons. Nine or 16.7% were evicted; 8-- 29.6%-- of these are women and only 1-- 6.7% is a man. Financial reasons were reported by 8 learners-- 14.8%, followed by job problems-- 2 or 3.7%-- and relocation-- 1 or 1.9%.

Twelve learners-- 22.2%-- also wrote-in their reasons for leaving their last permanent home. These reasons describe more fully the convergence of factors which might lead a family or individual to become homeless, and also highlight how irresponsible landlords and the shortage of safe and affordable housing is at the root of many homeless people's problems. The reasons include: "drugs and drinking"; "pregnancy"; "the place was unfit for me and my children"; "I was living in a foster home and had to leave"; "separation"; "because the landlord never fixed anything and I didn't pay him-- too many violations'; "I left New York"; "an abusive situation"; "I was in Puerto Rico and lost my house with Hurricane Hugo"; "the woman I was living with did not respect me no matter what I did for her-- she used me as a slave for her children."

### Means of Support

**The main source of income for most learners is public assistance-- 39 or 72.2% of the learners receive some kind of public assistance. However, 16 of the learners or 29.7% are employed.** This means that between a quarter and a third of the learners are part of the growing group of "the working poor." Only 1 learner is now supported by family.

Twenty-seven or 87.1% of the 31 women who answered this question receive AFDC; 16 or 51% receive WIC; 21 or 67.7% receive Medicaid-- no men report receiving Medicaid, which reduces the percentage of African-Americans receiving these health benefits to 28.6%; 4 or

12.9% of the women and only 1 man receive Emergency Assistance; only 1 man collects employment; 8 or 19.5% receive General Relief, with virtually no difference between the genders, but 6 of the 8 are over 36 years of age. Twenty-five or 46.3% of those who responded to this question receive Food Stamps-- 4 or 40% of the men and 21 or 67.7% of the women. Only one man over 36 receives Social Security Insurance; 1 Hispanic woman in the mid-age group receives SSDI; and noone receives veterans benefits. Five learners described their other income coming from Section 8, from a "work experience program", from a spouse whom she is separated from and from DSS.

### Learners and Work

**A significant portion of learners are working now, most have worked in the past, and many are looking for work now. Learners typically have held low skilled, low paying jobs, but education holds the promise of better work. Overall, 70.3% of the respondents see enrolling in an education program linked to employment. Nine or 75% of the men said that they want help looking for work. Fifty percent of the women said the same.** (See below: Enrollment and Jobs) While educators are reluctant to demand the link between education to jobs because this link is not appropriate for all learners at this time in their lives, it is clear that many learners are making the link for themselves.

**Between a quarter and a third of the learners are employed, mostly men**
Sixteen or 29.7% of the learners are employed full or part time-- 12 men and 4 women. (Of the 9 employed full time, 6 are men. Of the seven employed part time, 6 are men.) Typical jobs include janitorial, food service, housekeeping, cashier, stockperson, daycare worker, nursing home worker, and dishwasher.

A full 87% report that they have worked in the past-- 18 or 94.7% of the men and 29 or 87.9% of the women. The kind of work that learners have done in the past reflects the kind of work that they are doing now. This includes cook, clerical work, dishwasher, fast food worker, factory job, housekeeping in a motel, landscaping, maintenance, roofing, secretary, receptionist, car auction work, security, daycare worker, host, nurse's aide, and roofing.

More men are looking for work now than women-- 12 or 66.7% of the men are looking and 13 or 41.9% of the women are looking. This still means that a significant portion of the women with children are looking for work. More African-American learners are looking for work than any other racial/ethnic group-- 62.5% compared to 48.1% white or 54.5% Hispanic. The fact that this group is older and more male than the other groups may explain the high percentage. The age group where learners are looking for work the least is the under-twenty group. Some learners say that they would like to do whatever work is available-- just so long as they can earn a living. Some say that they are looking for the same kind of work that they have done in the past-- maintenance, factory, warehouse job. Others dream up the career ladder and say "work with computers", "secretarial work", "social work," "accounting" or "something related to law."

The kind of help finding a job that learners would like to get focuses on information and training-- from the simple "I 'd like some leads from people who are already working" which expresses the desire to be connected to an information network to skill oriented requests like "help looking through newspapers", "how to make a resume and get a reference", and actual "job training". The 15 learners who made the effort to explain the help they need are very clear about what they need. These requests should be honored in their instructional programs.

Almost all of the 11 learners who said that they do not want help finding a job are mothers with young children who cannot see how to work and parent simultaneously while their babies are young. A couple of these respondents were pregnant. One knows that she wants to go to hairdresser's school so does not need help figuring out a work/career path.

### Learners' Educational Histories

**The learner group has typically completed some high school-- mostly the tenth grade-- and none has completed below the seventh grade.** Ten or 18.5% of the learners completed tenth grade; 9 or 16.7% completed ninth grade; 8 or 14.8% completed eleventh grade; 7 or 13% completed eighth grade; 4 or 7.4% completed seventh grade; 2 or 3.7% completed the GED and 1 or 1.9% completed some college.

**Only a little over a quarter of the learners-- 16 or 29.6%-- have been enrolled in an adult education program before. Only 2 have been enrolled in an education program as part of other shelters' services.** This means that most learners may come to their first adult education classes with preconceived notions about what school is, based on prior experience in grade school and high school, but not based on experience with adult education classes. The enthusiasm which many of the learners express may well be based on the fact that this is their first educational experience where their goals are at the center of the learning process. The small number who have been enrolled in education programs through other shelters reflects both the high percentage of newly homeless learners in this sample as well as the scarcity of educational programs available through other shelters.

Those who attended other adult education programs had various reasons for leaving those programs. Understanding these reasons may help the current partnerships. Reasons for leaving before completion of the program include: moving out of the area; becoming pregnant; having a baby; not being able to afford a babysitter; not being sober enough to learn; transportation problems; having trouble learning with other people in class; having too many other things to do.

## B. Learners' Relationship to the Education Program

### Enrollment

**Learners enroll once and tend to stay enrolled.** Slightly over ninety percent (90.7%) of the respondents have been enrolled in their programs only once. But of the total of four learners who have been enrolled more than once, three are under the age of 20, indicating that younger learners drop out and return to their programs more frequently than older ones.

Learners were informed about the availability of an education program in a variety of ways, (from a friend, social worker, DSS, outreach worker) but most learners-- **70.4%-- were informed by shelter counselors.** This highlights both the important role which the shelter counselor plays in "making the education link" and the need for partnership between the shelter and education provider to be manifested at the shelter service level. Shelter counselors need to know enough about the education program to represent it realistically. It is interesting to note that 20% of the women said that they found out about their education program through a friend, as opposed to only 10% of the men. This reflects the observation in the adult education community that women talk about their need for education more and with less embarrassment than do men.

## Goals and Expectations

> *"What I need to work on mostly is my math. That seems to be what I lack education in the most. I guess at one point I just stopped learning it out of fear or mental blocks or the inability to say, "I don't know how," so I kind of bluffed my way through. Sitting back now, I guess I could say I have a fourth grade education in math. My children ask me, "Mom, how do you do this?" and I have to say, "Gee, I'm really not sure," and it's kind of embarrassing."*

Learners enrolled in their programs for a variety of reasons: to get a GED; to speak better English; to read, write and do math better; to help children with school and to read to them; to get a job or a better job, to better themselves in general; and because someone encouraged them to enroll. Some learners described in their own words why they enrolled in their education programs. A sample of these comments illustrates the clarity, complexity of purpose, and hope which adult learners bring with them: "I need to improve my life."; "I want to be a better mom."; "I know that I can't reach my goals without education."; "I want to go to college." "To do better for myself and to get my daughter back from DSS."; "To be able to make it in the world."; "To learn about parenting."; "To work on my drug and alcohol issues."; "So I can learn more and have a better opportunity to learn."; "To get a better job in the field I like."; "Just to improve myself." The surprise in the data is how many women want to learn more math.

- Getting the GED

  **Slightly over three quarters-- 75.9%-- of the respondents said that they enrolled in order to get the GED.** A full 80% of the women said they want to get the GED; and 68% of the men want to get the GED. (The number is lower for the men in part because the men are older and desire for the GED decreases with age according to this data.) Nonetheless, the fact that slightly over three quarters of the learners want to get their GED raises important issues for the Project. What does getting the GED mean to the learners? Do they believe that the GED is a guarantee of a job or further education? What do programs believe they are doing when they prepare learners for the GED? Do providers share the assumption that GED = job? Because the majority of learners articulate their education goal in terms of the GED, and because the meaning of the GED for both teachers and learners may be complex and have consequences for how learners continue or do not continue their education, it seems to be critical to take the meaning systems of both the teachers/tutors and learners into account when designing a program.

- ESL

  **The ESL need articulated in the survey group is small.** In general, the data suggest that English language skills among Hispanic learners are good. Seven or 53.8% of the 13 Hispanic respondents reported that Spanish is the language they speak most frequently. The same percentage also said that they want to learn to speak English better. Presumably this is the very same 53.8 %, indicating that the Hispanic learners who do not speak English as their first language want to improve their English language skills.

  Only 30.8% reported that they want to continue with ESL classes after they leave the shelter, indicating the hope that they can move on to other subjects once they master English. However, it would be oversimplifying to say that the overall need for ESL classes is minimal because the ESL need articulated in the survey is relatively small. Services available thus far have been predominantly ABE/GED oriented. The Lawrence YWCA program and Catholoc Charities of Worcester are the two programs which currently offer ESL classes, but the Cambridge Adult Learning Center and The Literacy Project have also identified a need for ESL classes.

- **Read, Write and Do Better Math**
  **Slightly over thirty five percent of the respondents said that they want to read better; 40.7% that they want to write better and 50% that they want to do math better.** Nineteen or 54.3% of the women-- somewhat higher than the average-- say they want help with math, while only 10 or 28.6% say that they want help with reading. Conversely, 9 or 47.4% of the men say that they want to read better, and 8 or 42.1% say that they want to do math better. These figures do not seem to be affected greatly by race or ethnicity, except that Hispanic learners, male and female, want to learn to read better at a slightly higher rate than other racial/ethnic groups. Women consistently discussed their math fears and how teachers helped them to overcome their feelings and beliefs that they could not learn to do math. At the same time, they were determined to learn how to do math because they saw math as a necessary skill either for running a household, getting the GED, getting a job, or helping children with homework.

- **Enrollment and Children**
  **However, respondents did not consistently answer questions about reasons for enrolling in an education program in terms of their children.** No men said that they enrolled to help their children with school, and only one said that he enrolled to read to his children. Twelve or 34.3% of the mothers said that they enrolled to help their children with school; and only 7 or 20% said that they enrolled to read to their kids. (Of these 7, 4 are "other" non-native English speaking mothers, indicating their desire to pass on English language skills to their children.)

  The interview data contradicted this survey somewhat, indicating that even if mothers do not actually state helping their children with school as a reason for enrolling in an education program, they are well aware of the benefits to their children of increased parental skills, and hope that increased parental skills will result in a more secure home life which will directly benefit the children. This makes sense given the fact that the **majority of women have very young children and have not yet faced the homework/reading challenge.** Therefore, for young mothers of young children, the link between increased parental skills and children is seen not so much as facilitating literacy, reading and homework, as it is insuring increased security. At the same time, in response to questions about program outcomes, 29.4% of the women reported that they read to their children as a result of participating in the program, indicating that mothers do pass on their skills even if they do not enter a program with that as a stated goal. (See below: Learner Identified Outcomes)

  > ***"Coming from parents who were uneducated and had no emphasis whatsoever on learning skills and still don't, sometimes I think children are a product of their parents. So if you put [education] in at some point, so be it at the shelter, then the parents have an introduction, that somehow they're responsible, that it's important for them to care about their children's education. It's important for them to learn math so that they can help their children with math. It's important for them to read stories to them. It has to start somewhere, and if it's something that they don't have or they didn't get from their parents, then how is somebody going to know that it's relevant?".***

- **Enrollment and Jobs**
  Building their long term picture, many women--15 or 42.9%-- said that getting a job is a goal of enrolling in an education program. Nine others said that getting a better job is a goal, bringing to a total of 24-- 65.3%-- the number of women who see education linked to employment. Similarly, 7 or 36.8% of the men said that they want to get a job as a goal of enrolling in a program, and 7 more say that they want a better job, bringing to a total of 14

or 73.1% the number of men who see education linked to employment. **Overall, 70.3% of the respondents see enrolling in an education program linked to employment.** Fully 50% of all respondents over 26 years of age said that they want to get a better job.

- The Dynamic of Race

**Race and ethnicity influence the data on enrollment and jobs in a significant way.** Only 2-- 22.2%-- out of 9 African-American learners said that getting a job is a goal of enrollment. But 3 out of 9-- or 33.3%-- said that getting a better job is a goal, indicating perhaps the futility that some African-American learners feel about getting a job at all on the one hand, and the hope on the other, that, once employed, education will mean mobility. Only 7 out of 28 of the white respondents-- 25%-- said that getting a better job is a goal, while 12 out of 28-- 42.9%-- said that getting a job is a goal, indicating the opposite faith that education will lead to employment even if you do not already have a job.

Well over half-- **57.4%-- of the total respondents said that they enrolled to better themselves in general.** But 76.9% of those over 36 years of age said that they enrolled to better themselves in general, indicating an intense desire among the older learners to use an education program to move forward with their lives. **Forty-four percent of African-American respondents said that they enrolled in order to better themselves in general.** While this is only 10% lower than the aggregate percentage, it is 16% below the white and Hispanic respondents. (A little over 60% of white respondents said that they enrolled in order to better themselves in general; 61.5% of the Hispanic respondents said the same.) This perhaps indicates that African-American learners in the Project see education as a way to acquire skills but not necessarily leading to general improvement of their situations.

- Dynamics of Race and Gender

Responses to the next reason for enrolling in an education program continue to shed light on the race dynamic and also open the door to understanding how the gender dynamic works within the Project. While 46.3% of the total respondents said that they enrolled because "someone encouraged me", **88.9% of the African-American respondents said that they enrolled because someone encouraged them.** (This is compared to 39.3% of the white respondents and 46.2% of the Hispanic respondents.) These figures highlight how important it is for African-American homeless people, who are marginalized and discriminated against on the basis of their race as well as their homeless status, to have programs available to them which "encourage" them and convey connectedness and hope. When you are so far on the outside that the inside seems unattainable, a special invitation, welcome, or encouragement can bring the inside within reach. Apparently, some shelter partnerships serving African-American learners are extending the invitations and providing the encouragement to enter education programs in a way that feels right-- right enough for the African-American respondents to know that they entered because "someone encouraged me."

Surprisingly, fewer women said that they enrolled because someone encouraged them than did men. Almost three quarters of the men-- 73.7%-- said that they enrolled because someone encouraged them, compared to 31.4% of the women. Our analysis did not allow us to cross tabulate for race and gender simultaneously, so we can only deduce that African-American men raise the percentage for men in general. Given this, the gender dynamic is still significant. There is more than a forty point spread on this variable, indicating a very significant difference between men and women. Men need to be encouraged to participate in an education program more than women, who typically are more at home in a learning environment and who, in this population in particular, are greatly motivated to return to school so they can create secure households for their children.

The need for continued support for African-American learners is illustrated by data from another question. In response to "What would help you to continue taking classes after you leave the shelter?", 51.9% of the total respondents said "support from teachers" would help them stay involved in education but **77.8% of the African-American respondents said that they needed the continued support of teachers to stay involved.** This is compared to 48% of the white and 46.2% of the Hispanic respondents. Again the need for invitation, connection, and continuity of relationship comes to the fore. There is no difference to speak of between the way men and women answer this question. (See below: Continuing Education After the Shelter)

- **Expectations about the Program**

  In general, the program is giving learners what they expected, and then a little more--87% said that the program is giving them what they expect and 31.5% said that the program is giving them something they did not expect. Typical descriptions of what they expected the program to give include: "To better myself so I can get my GED.": "To learn how to deal with the difficulties in my life"; "To read better."; "To prepare for the (GED) tests"; "To learn how to be more independent"; "To get a better job"; "To learn more about myself and my history"

  Typical descriptions of what they did not expect the program to give include: "I like being here!"; "Self confidence"; "Encouragement and self esteem"; "The program is helping me get to college."; "Confidence in my ability to learn."; "I feel good about learning after so many years " These comments and others like them describe the self-discovery, joy and satisfaction that the respondents experience as part of their program. It is telling that they did not expect these experiences to be part of their adult education classes. They most likely expected school as an adult to be like school as a child--tedious but necessary. Only 7 respondents were critical of the program when they said that they were not getting what they wanted from the program. Three said that they wanted the program to move at a faster pace; one said that classes were harder than she expected; two said that they had not improved enough; and one was still waiting for his personal tutor.

**Learners Descriptions of What They Are Studying ; What They Especially Like; and What They Would Change**

Learners descriptions of what they are studying are consistent with their reasons for enrolling in a program. They are studying: reading-- 63%; writing-- 57.4%; math--53.7%; English vocabulary 40.7%; and for the GED 64.8%. **What learners like about their programs reflects the personal satisfaction and growth they achieve through their relationships with their teachers, with each other and with the learning process.** Several learners discuss how they feel free to learn because "there is no pressure" to learn at someone else's pace or to pass a test that has no meaning. Others discuss the freedom of meeting one-on-one with their tutors-- "It's just me and my tutor" or "I find my tutor very helpful; if I need time, she gives it." Others still describe the benefits of small classes, caring teachers, and being part of a community of learners. "We are not in a great big classroom and we can concentrate more."; "Anna is not just my teacher; she is my friend."; and "I am with people now who want to do something better with their lives."

The high esteem in which both teachers and the program in general are held takes the edge off the criticisms of their programs which learners also articulate clearly. **In programs where there is no daycare, mothers would like daycare. Some learners asked for more books and equipment like computers and typewriters. Some want to speed up the pace of instruction or more time in class or classes scheduled more conveniently at night.** The issue of pace of instruction seems to be linked to "levelling" learners who have very different skill levels into one class. Those who have more advanced skills do not want to be held back by those who are not so skilled. Others asked for more privacy, more teachers and more tutors. Noone criticized teachers or tutors or the kind of instruction given.

### Learner Identified Outcomes

> *"And then I had to be willing to accept that somebody else has to know that I don't know, so that I can allow them to teach me. It's been a process. And I had to be in a safe environment, and I had to be in a stable environment. It's just been a process of getting together all the things I needed to be able to start somewhere. I have a lot of confidence about the future... "*

Fifty two out of 54 respondents-- 96.3%-- said that they have changed because they have participated in an adult education program. One reported no change; one was missing data. Most learners focus less on changes in actual skill development than on changes in their attitudes about themselves and about learning. They know that the changes in their attitudes about themselves and about learning set the stage for increased skill development.

One third of all the respondents said that they read, write and do math better. But more women than men reported doing better math--47.1% to 22.2%, consistent with their goal to learn more math. Slightly over 48% of the total group reported that they are meeting their educational goals. This is a positive report that also reflects the distance that about half the learners in the survey see themselves having to travel before they fully meet their goals.

Sixty-three percent of the total reported increased self confidence, although those under 25 reported this at a significantly lower rate than did the older learners. (Roughly 35% of the under-twenty group compared to roughly 75% of the over-twenty group reported increased self confidence.) Significantly, 100% of the African-American learners reported increased self confidence compared to 55.6% of the white learners and 75% of the Hispanic learners.

Sixty-three percent of the total reported increased excitement about learning and the desire to learn more, although the under-twenty group, reporting 50% increased excitement and desire to learn more, trailed the other age groups by roughly ten points. African-American learners at 77.8% were a whole 17% ahead of white learners who reported 59.3% increased excitement about learning and desire to learn more; 66.7% of Hispanic learners reported increased excitement about learning. Women reported excitement about learning and increased desire to learn more at fifteen percent more than men-- 70.6% to 55.6%.

Slightly over 59% of the total group said that they can now ask for help when they need it. But ten of the the twelve Hispanic learners-- 83.3%-- reported that they now ask for help when they they need it, indicating that English language instruction has greatly increased their ability to speak up. Almost 54% of the total group said that they are not embarrassed by what they don't know. The under-twenty group reported this at 85.7%, suggesting the tremendous relief these young people must experience in classrooms and tutorials where they are given permission to simply admit they do not know something and start learning from that point. Women reported not being embarrassed by what they don't know at a higher rate than men-- 61.8% to 44.4%. Remarkably, 59.3% of the total group reported that they have more control control over their future,.with only the 26 to 35 age group noticeably differing from this pattern at 36.4%.

**These findings are some of the most important findings of this learner survey. Given the short period of time some learners have been enrolled, these self reported results of enrollment– increased self esteem, excitement about learning and desire to learn more, knowing how to ask for help, and not being embarrassed by what you don't know– are encouraging in the extreme. They suggest that the partnerships between participating shelters and adult education centers are pioneering methods of instruction that speak to the emotional needs of homeless people as well as to their more narrowly defined educational needs.**

Only 20% of the learners reported that they manage agency relationships better (healthcare agencies; DPW; childrens' daycare, etc.). Either this means that learners saw themselves managing agency relationships well before instruction began with little or no need to improve them, or that they simply have not seen the effect of what is learned in class on how they conduct their agency business. This is an interesting statistic because many instructors would agree that helping learners to manage their relationships with agencies is an important component of empowerment through education. The question remains about how an education program might help learners to do this better.

Other outcomes include: 37% of the respondents reported that they now have friends who have understand them; 24% reported that they are "looking for work" as a result of participating in an education program; and 9.3% of the total group (all white and Hispanic men) reported that they are actually working as a result of participating in a program.

### What Makes It Hard to Come to Class?

> *"I was worried about who was watching my children. I was worried, I was in a state of despair."*

**A real majority of the total group– 83.3%– like having class as part of shelter services.** Learners articulated their reasons for this very well. Reasons include: "no transportation problems"; "it's convenient"; "it feels good knowing I'm not alone being homeless and going to school"; "the shelter gives you incentives" "mothers wouldn't be able to afford good daycare and go to school"; and homeless people have no money so they wouldn't be able to pay for these services". Only one person said that the proximity of services will "make people lazy". One mother talked about how dedicated she was to getting her GED but, while she was in a shelter, getting a place to live was her number one priority. During this time she "escaped" to class when life in the shelter bore down on her but it was only after she got her own apartment that she started to work in earnest on her GED. There is no doubt that having classes as part of shelter services makes it possible for homeless people to enroll.

**Despite the relative ease of having classes offered in conjunction with shelter services, learners find it difficult to come to class.** Fifty five percent of the total reported that it is difficult to come to class sometimes, although the 26-35 age group reported difficulty at 83.3%. Slightly more women than men said it was difficult--61.8% to 50%-- suggesting the problems mothers have with daycare and not wanting to leave their children. African-American respondents reported difficulty at a higher rate than whites or Hispanics: 77.8% to 48.1% and 58.3%.

In fact, 33.3% of the women said that they do not want to leave their children even to come to class. Only three respondents reported that being sick is a problem– all women under 20. Almost 30% report other appointments which have to be kept. Work kept only one respondent from attending class. Other reasons for finding it difficult to go class reflect the constraints and worries which are part of being homeless. With candor, respondents said: "My children get sick-- it's hard if you've been up all night with a baby in a shelter"; "Sometimes it just doesn't seem so important"; "Sometimes I find it hard to concentrate; it's nerve wracking to be with other people when they are talking alot"; "I have alot on my mind"; "Sometime I think that I don't want to be there."

### Continuing Education after the Shelter

> ***"All of a sudden, I find myself very hungry for knowledge about things that interest me. If I don't have an interest, I'm obviously not going to have the same kind of enthusiasm, but I find myself thinking, 'Oh, I want to take this and I want to do that and...' and, what a relief that is -- to be able to look at education as something exciting and to be happy and enthusiastic about, instead of something foreboding, like 'Oh my God, I've got to go to school.'"***

Classes and tutorials have been such a positive experience for most learners that a large majority want to continue taking classes after they leave the shelter--88.9%. Some things would enable learners to transform their intention to remain in classes into action, and they include:

- Good daycare-- 33.3% report that they would need some help with good daycare.
- Transportation-- 33.3% report that they would need some help with transportation.
- Continued support from teachers--51.9% report that they need the continued support of teachers; as mentioned above 77.8% of learners who are African-Americans report the need for continued support of learners; the twenty-one to twenty-five age group also reported a high need for support--71.4%.
- Support from friends in the class-- 20.4% of the total report that the continued support of friends would make it more feasible to continue classes. But 28.6% of the women report this to be true for them, while only 6.3% of the men report it. This is one instance where women articulate their need for peer support and continuity of relationship. Other possible supports include: drug treatment support; support with family problems; a secure home; having teachers/tutors come to learners' homes; and building more self esteem.

Learners are interested in taking a variety of courses after they leave the shelter and complete their GED's. They include:

- ESL class: 9.3% of the total want to continue with ESL classes, or 30.8% of the Hispanic learners and 25% of the "other" non English speaking learners.
- ABE class: only 5.6% of the total see themselves continuing with an ABE class, all non native English speakers.
- GED class: 38.9% of the total want to continue with GED classes. A majority of learners who are African-American want to continue with the GED-- 55.6%-- as compared with 33.3% of the learners who are white or 38.5% who are Hispanic. For African-American learners, taking the GED is a longer term goal, something to reach for after refining basic skills; 78.6% of the white learners start out saying that they want to get the GED and then turn their longer term sites to going to college.
- Going to college: 38.9% of the respondents reported that they want to go to college. Only 22.2% of the learners who are African-American and 23.1% who are Hispanic reported that college is a goal for them, compared with 51.9% of the learners who are white.
- Tutoring: 22.2% of the total want to tutor and most of these are African-American learners-- 66.7%-- as distinct from 7.4% white learners and 23.1% Hispanic learners.
- Job training classes: 33.3% of the total want job training. Forty six percent of the over thirty-six age group wants job training. Older learners want the skills to become employed.
- Vocational education classes: 13% want vocational education classes.

- Other classes which learners want to take include: cosmetology, counselor training, computer training, courses in childcare.

### Importance of Education Compared to Other Shelter Services

The results of the learner survey generally demonstrate the value which learners place on educational services which are offered in conjunction with shelter services. Answers to a question which asks learners to actually rate the value of education compared to other services demonstrate directly just how much value the homeless people who responded to this survey place on education. Of the 53 learners who answered the question "How important is education compared to other services?", **42 or 78.8% said that education is very important**. Nine or 16.7% said that education is important. Two or 3.7% said it is not very important. **There is no doubt about the enormous value which the homeless adults in this pilot study attribute to education services provided in conjunction with shelter services.**

# IV. STATISTICAL PROFILES/ PROGRAM PROFILES

# Introduction to Program Profiles

## Evaluation Methods

Between April 26 and June 23, 1990, an independent evaluator had the privilege of visiting all nine programs funded under the federal McKinney Adult Education for the Homeless Grant. First year program visits were between 1 and 1 1/2 days long. Second year program visits lasted 1 1/2 to 2 days. During these visits, the teachers, tutors, program coordinators, childcare workers, shelter managers, family life advocates and administrators from partner agencies all generously shared their time and insights. The evaluator also observed as many classes as possible. Although students' perspectives are indispensable to a full and just picture of each program, in view of the simultaneous evaluation effort to collect in-depth information from students, this evaluator did not attempt to discuss the program with students.

Although the evaluator was new to the world of shelters and to many of the special challenges confronting homeless education, she brought a "hands on" perspective to looking at education programs, as a teacher and coordinator for programs working with disadvantaged adults. Evaluation methods included: interviews with administrative, teaching and support staff both as individuals and in groups; observation of classroom and other activities; and review of written materials. These materials included: proposals; quarterly reports; recruitment materials; intake, monitoring and follow-up forms; curricula and learning materials and student folders. (See Appendix B for the site visit protocol);

## The Profiles

The nine program profiles that follow were created to communicate to the Massachusetts Bureau of Adult Education and back to the programs what the evaluator gleaned from her visits. **They offer a "snapshot" of each program at an early stage in its first or second year.** As products of one person's observation and reflection, profiles are marked by her particular values, understanding and "lens." Yet, within the constraints of a standardized format, the evaluator made every effort to honor each program's integrity, and to translate each program's vision for the work it has undertaken. She tried to identify concerns and offer recommendations that moved with the best rhythms in each program's own dynamic. Finally, she mined each visit to pull out the nuggets of wisdom, experience or technique that every program has to offer. These profiles are offered with a sincere hope: that when each program reflects on its efforts to provide adult education for homeless adults, and can see where its efforts join with others, that point of convergence will ground a more informed and powerful common effort.

## Some Differences among Programs

Each program among the nine has approached adult education for the homeless in a unique way. Initiatives have targeted different homeless populations and different kinds of partner institution, from six or eight bed transitional programs to a 360 bed emergency shelter. Some partnerships bring together one,two or three shelters or drop-in centers with an education provider, while others aren't really partnerships at all, in that program direction is determined by a single agency. Programs operate in very different political contexts: while City administrations in several towns have supported these initiatives, in a few locales programs are battling a hostile political and/or racial climate. Programs have very different concepts of what education can be for homeless adults, and they employ a wide range of learning activities, methods and materials. The initiatives have different goals for learning and different ideas about what transition means.

## Some Commonalities

Yet, every program emphasizes the importance of developing self-esteem as well as academic skills. Every program helps learners identify some kind of goal and map out strategies for working towards that goal. All nine programs confront shortages of money and staff, some more severe than others. All initiatives are struggling to stay alive in difficult times, when budget cuts are forcing them to lay off staff. Every week another state agency issues another short-sighted regulation that further squeezes homeless people and undermines educational programs' capacity to offer long-term avenues out of homelessness. By now, it's likely that every program has had to explain to a woman why her housing voucher was being taken away -- or why she has no hope of seeing one for many months. As other services close down, all the shelters in this initiative have had to open their doors to more victims of battering and more de-institutionalized patients.

Yet, they all go on, and in many ways they beat the odds. This is because every one of the nine programs brings together dedicated, overworked and usually underpaid educators and shelter workers, who commit their best skills and energy to this initiative. Again and again, coordinators or administrators talked about doing "whatever it takes" to make this initiative work. Many times they praised teachers, shelter workers and child care staff for their extra concern and effort.

## How It Happens

It became clear to this evaluator that regardless of an agency's budget, resources or proposal, adult education for the homeless only happens when individual people make the effort to care for each other in remarkably ordinary ways. This initiative happens when a teacher sits down with a shelter guest for meals and conversation, or drives her to the GED test center. It happens when a tired shelter worker offers to help a guest with homework, or reminds him to take medication so he will stay calm enough to study. It happens when a tutor takes a guest to open a bank account, and when a program coordinator makes yet another phone call to track a learner who has disappeared. It happens when secretaries watch babies for mothers who are in class, and when babysitters give mothers advice on toilet training and children's books. It happens when a woman who is called a "teacher" tells a woman who is called "homeless" about moments in her own life when she felt as desperate and powerless as she imagines this other woman feels today. When the learner/teacher tells the teacher/learner about her dream of becoming a photographer, or a secretary, or a very good mother, or a teacher. When they promise each other to keep working on their own dreams.

# YEAR 1
# PROGRAMS

# PROJECT LIFT

## CAMBRIDGE COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTER/CAMBRIDGE YWCA/HILDEBRAND FAMILY SELF-HELP CENTER

# STATISTICAL PROFILE

*"I'm learning how to benefit myself, along with helping my children get a better education. I'm learning how to deal with life in general because it's a necessity to get a good education, and to strive to do the best that I can."*

Demographics: N = 5

All of the learners surveyed in the Cambridge Community Learning Center/Cambridge YWCA program were females with children. The majority of the respondents had no more than two children. Over half of those surveyed (60%) were over the age of 36; 40% were Black, and 40% Hispanic. Over half of the learners were single. Twenty percent of the respondents were divorced and 20% of the respondents were separated.

The overwhelming majority of the learners surveyed had lived in Massachusetts over ten years, with 60% of the respondents living in Massachusetts since birth. Eighty percent of those interviewed indicated that English was their most frequently spoken language.

Forty percent of those interviewed indicated that they had slept in a hotel/motel in the past six months. Twenty percent of those interviewed had lived with family and 20% had lived in a shelter in the past six months. Eight percent reported that they were currently living in a shelter and 20% were living in rooming houses. The majority reported that this was their first time in a shelter. The most prominent reasons for leaving their last permanent home were: financial, eviction, and family problems.

All respondents indicated that their main source of income was public assistance. All of those interviewed were receiving AFDC, medicaid, and food stamps. Eighty percent received WIC and only 40% were receiving emergency assistance. Eighty percent of the respondents indicated that they had worked in the past and 40% indicated that they were currently looking for work.

Education

All of the learners surveyed had completed at least 10 grades of school. Sixty percent reported being in an adult education program previously. Over half of those interviewed had been in the program 4 to 12 weeks and all learners reported that this was their first time in the program. The majority indicated that they found out about the program through a shelter counselor.

Those interviewed indicated that the following reasons were most important in enrolling in the program: to help children with school work; to do math better; to better myself in general; to get a job; and to get a GED. All of the learners reported that the program was giving them what they expected. However, respondents did not indicate what they expected from the program. The overwhelming majority indicated that the program was not giving them anything they did not expect. The learners indicated that they were currently studying math, reading, and for the GED.

Eighty percent of those interviewed indicated that there was something about the program that they especially liked. Some of the responses were, "I can speak better with other people now;" "people working one-to-one;" and "I find my tutor helpful-- if I need time she helps me." Only one person indicated that there was something about the program she/he wished to change and that was "to go faster."

All of those interviewed indicated that they felt they had changed. All respondents felt they had more self confidence and control over their future. Other frequent responses included: I can ask for help; am excited and want to learn more; and am meeting my educational goals.

All of the learners indicated that they liked having classes as part of the shelter. Eighty percent indicated that it was hard to come to the program sometimes. Difficulties included: other appointments to keep; life in the shelter makes it hard; and do not want to leave kids.

All of those interviewed indicated that they would like to continue taking classes after they leave the shelter and that in order to continue they would need: support from teachers (100%); support from friends in the class; and good daycare. The majority said that they would like to continue in a tutoring program (80%). Over half of those interviewed indicated that they would like to enroll in job training. Forty percent of those interviewed indicated that they would like to go to college. The overwhelming majority indicated that education was very important to them compared to other services they need.

# PROGRAM PROFILE

## I. Program Summary

### Program History and Context

- The Partners

The City of Cambridge's Department of Human Services is the lead agency for Project LIFT, which was started in January 1990 with a McKinney Adult Education for the Homeless Grant. The City brought together three partners in this initiative: the Community Learning Center, the YWCA Residence Program and the Hildebrand Family Self-Help Center. All three initially looked into the McKinney grant independently, and all spoke positively of the City's role in establishing the partnership. Shelter directors praised Cambridge's efforts "to provide for all who live here."

One striking aspect of Project LIFT is that all three partner agencies are philosophically very much in tune: they share a deep and lasting commitment to serving the neediest members of the Cambridge community. For 19 years, the Cambridge Community Learning Center (CCLC) has worked to make educational services accessible to all City residents. It has developed special programs for the unemployed, immigrants, A.F.D.C. recipients and other poor adults; shelter residents have also attended the Center's regular classes. The YWCA has long offered housing to women, and currently houses 150 women each year in a single-room occupancy residence, in addition to its family program. St. Paul's African Methodist Episcopal Church, Hildebrand's parent agency, has served the poor for over a century and currently operates a Christian Life Center, meal programs, a food pantry and other services.

- The Need

Project LIFT was born at a time when homeless Cambridge women are facing an increasingly long and difficult struggle to rebuild their families and obtain permanent housing. These women are the first to feel each successive wave of budget cuts, as state and local agencies slash their services to the poor, the homeless and others in crisis. The YWCA and Hildebrand Family Shelters each provide housing for 10 families. They primarily serve young women-- average age is 21-- who have one or two children and incomes below the poverty level. Most of them are dealing with multiple problems besides poverty and homelessness. Many are former runaways who have never had a stable living situation; they have gone through the Department of Youth Services, foster homes, and a large number of schools. There are also substance abusers, mentally ill mothers and children, abused women and children, and AIDS victims among them. Some women are involved in custody disputes; others are fleeing battering (although neither shelter is a safe house, they are both seeing an increasing number of battered guests). The majority are dropouts, about a third have very limited reading and writing skills, and another third could benefit from English as a Second Language study. Guests include Spanish, Creole, Portuguese and Khmer speakers.

Both shelter providers are committed to helping families establish long-term health and stability as they work to secure permanent housing. Due to limitations on housing vouchers as well as changing regulations concerning homeless women and children, guests have recently begun to stay much longer in the shelters: six to eight months, as opposed to the previous average of three to four months. The YWCA and Hildebrand Shelters have marshalled a wide range of resources to meet homeless families' multiple needs, including: housing search, family and child advocacy, access to medical care, counseling, childcare and other services.

Project LIFT offers education as an additional tool homeless women can use to access housing, social service and other systems, and to make these systems work for them. It gives homeless women a way to do something positive for themselves: to develop their skills and self-confidence as they wait for housing. In the long-run, it may prove to be a first step back to continuing education. Through LIFT, the Learning Center offers YWCA Family Shelter and Hildebrand residents a range of options for basic education, literacy, adult secondary education and English as a Second Language. Before this initiative, guests who wanted educational services had to be referred to CCLC, the Somerville Adult Learning Center, Bunker Hill Community College and E.T. training programs, where they competed for scarce slots.

At the time of the evaluation visit, Project LIFT had been in operation for less than two months and had enrolled nine learners. It had begun providing classes on-site at the YWCA shelter and entry to CCLC classes, as well as individualized tutoring, educational counseling and advocacy.

## Program Vision and Goals

- The YWCA Family Shelter Program and Its Goals

Five women with children live in one to two room apartments at the main Y facility, while five others have self-contained units with kitchens and baths in a City-owned house, known as Bigelow House. Both shelters offer common space, and the Y has a library, gym and a children's playground. The Family Shelter staff includes a shelter manager, 24-hour on-site family life advocates and an on-site social worker. Staff from a variety of other agencies also provide services: social workers from the Departments of Welfare and Social Services; housing search workers from the City Department of Human Services; child service advocates from Family and Children Services and Early Intervention agencies; and a displaced homemaker advocate. They have Spanish-speaking staff.

The Y Shelters try to respond to guests as whole people. Besides offering advocacy, housing, life-skills, health, parenting and children's services and a wide variety of referrals, the Y has developed programs to meet guests' needs for recreation and self-expression. Guests can use the Y's sports facilities and can enroll in classes there at no charge. The shelter holds weekly picnics and outings. The Family Shelter has also received a grant from the Cambridge Arts Council to offer photography classes to guests. These activities are particularly important now that guests stay much longer at the shelter. After an initial rush of activity at intake, frustration sets in. Guests have little to do; they can't look for housing because there are no vouchers. Creative and educational programs give them something to do while they're waiting. It's a way to do something to help themselves move forward, instead of being passive, vegetating.

The YWCA Shelter staff try to help guests get clean, well and confident, and to gain some measure of control over their lives. The multiple demands state agencies make on guests are particularly frustrating. Even as shelters are helping women gain control, the State agencies are taking it away by insisting that women look for jobs or enter training programs if they want to stay in the shelter past 90 days. Shelter staff emphasize that education programs must be voluntary if they are to be useful to homeless women; otherwise they are counterproductive-- another command.

In this context, the Shelter Director hopes that Project LIFT will address a range of critical needs:

- Build self-esteem, the key issue for 90% of shelter guests; (They feel incapable of anything; being in a shelter means total failure.);
- Provide an immediate educational response when every other program has a waiting list; ("When you get a Mom who's ready to do this, there needs to be a spot. They won't wait.");
- Help homeless mothers support their children's education, which is important to many of them;
- Offer a personal contact for re-entry to the educational system, a big issue for women who are dropouts;
- Help shift homeless women's focus from survival to moving forward by giving them something they can actually do, when there's so much they can't do anything about-- like get a housing voucher; and
- Help guests develop skills for dealing with institutions and making systems work for them-- which they often can't do. At the CCLC, they learn to deal with a less sheltered environment than the shelter.

- Hildebrand Family Self-Help Center and Its Goals

The Hildebrand operates a two-year old self-help program that offers shelter and support to families; it serves intact families and well as mothers with children. Staff see their guests not as homeless, but rather as community members to whom they, as Christians, must respond:

> "Once they walk through that door, they're not homeless. They're just families, in a situation anyone could be in. They've dealt with poverty, have never had a chance. They believe that's normal, that life is always a struggle. We try to help them see that no failure is total."

The staff includes a director, administrative assistant, family life advocate, and intake worker, and a 24 hour house manager.

Hildebrand tries to go beyond sheltering and providing social services; it seeks to help guests leave "with more independence and a greater handle on life skills." Most of their guests need employment, education and help with finances and parenting skills, as well as housing. They usually come in with a service plan from the Department of Welfare, which the guest and shelter must hold to once it has been signed. The Family Life Advocate helps them focus, set specific goals, find a starting point, and find resources and services to meet those goals. Now that guests stay four to eight months, there is time to work on those goals; when guests stayed around eight weeks, the focus was on meeting immediate needs and finding housing.

The staff believe that education is at the top of guests' "hierarchy of needs." Education provides a chance to break out of the cycle of poverty; but it must be considered in the context of "everything else that's going on with them." In the long run, it must also be linked with job opportunities and economic development. Hildebrand staff is very hopeful about Project LIFT's potential to help guests meet a variety of important goals. They do emphasize that having an on-site program is important; for people who fear going out or who believe that they can't succeed, having someone come to the shelter makes a big difference. Before this initiative, Hildebrand referred learners to the CCLC, "but many of them were afraid to go there, even though it's only five minutes from Hildebrand."

In the Hildebrand Director's view, this program should meet a range of needs:

- Renew guests' interest in learning, and change their negative perceptions of school;
- Connect guests with opportunities for continued learning;
- Heighten guests' self-confidence;
- Help guests gain perspective on their lives– be able to look backward and forward, see that life can get better;
- Respond to guests' need for activity and focus (after an intense period of activity at intake, there's a lull); and
- Help guests and staff shift to a focus on longer-term services.

- The Community Learning Center

The Community Learning Center (CCLC) is a Cambridge institution. For almost two decades, it has provided educational services to all interested adult residents. In 1981, the Learning Center became a division of the City Department of Human Services; but some in the community know it as "Dunkin Donuts University," thanks to the its location three flights up from a Central Square donut shop. (After a long tenure there, CCLC moved this summer.) The CCLC has demonstrated its commitment and capacity to offer educational services to Cambridge's neediest adults. Through contracts with the Department of Public Welfare E.T. program and other agencies, the Center has developed special programs for the unemployed, welfare recipients, displaced homemakers other disadvantaged groups.

It has also collaborated with a wide range of community organizations, ethnic and neighborhood associations, schools, training centers and libraries. Although the CCLC had not previously offered special programs for homeless adults, it has had local shelter residents among its students and has taken a referral from the Long Island Shelter program. Entering a partnership to provide educational services to homeless people was a logical extension of the CCLC's mission of making education accessible to all Cambridge adults.

The Community Learning Center and its staff are known throughout the state for effective, innovative approaches to teaching adult education and literacy. The CCLC uses a wide range of materials and methods, varying its approach based on the particular needs and interests of each learner or group. Nonetheless, the Center's programs are guided by a clear vision and goals. For CCLC staff, adult education must be learner-centered, responding to their needs and interests; but it must also use reading, writing and problem-solving approaches to engage learners in critical reflection on their own lives and the world around them. To be empowering, adult education must address relevant "life skills" as well as reading, writing and math. Finally, it must draw out and affirm learners' own knowledge, and actively develop learners' capacity to support each other. To this end, the CCLC puts Basic Literacy students into weekly support groups as well as classes; and teachers bring common concerns like AIDS, drugs, unemployment and homelessness into the classroom.

The Center offers classes in literacy, Adult Secondary Education, English as a Second Language (ESL), and career and educational counseling. Classes are popular, and they generally have a waiting list of six months to a year. Many learners stay with the CCLC for years. The Center has specialists in learning disabilities, reading, math and ESL, as well as an educational counselor, and they will all be available to advise Project LIFT. In addition to professional expertise, the CCLC will provide the project with a wide range of resources and learning materials.

The Community Learning Center's overall goal for this program is to provide educational opportunities for women in local shelters. It hopes to use tutoring to get them interested in education, and eventually to transition them into CCLC classes (with the option to continue with tutors). The Learning Center sees its role as supporting and assessing the program. Through its involvement, it also hopes to learn more about homeless learners and their needs. CCLC has a participatory management style: the full-time staff meets regularly to review and plan for programs. The CCLC staff recognize the desirability of eventually expanding this program to serve other Cambridge shelters; but first they want it to become stable and active in Hildebrand and the YWCA. Project LIFT is based in the CCLC, and its Coordinator is on staff there.

- Program Coordinators' Role and Vision

Project LIFT's key staff person is the Program Coordinator, Esther Leonelli. Esther has taught math at the Learning Center and elsewhere. She has also worked extensively with the homeless, and, in fact, knew the YWCA Shelter Director from having volunteered together at a women's shelter. She has served on the board of two shelters, and brings to this project a year of experience as Co-Coordinator of "Project Lighthouse," the McKinney-funded adult education program at Boston's Long Island Shelter. The Coordinator's dual orientation to education and homelessness have given her a valuable perspective on how education can serve shelter guests.

Project LIFT was conceived primarily as a tutoring model, where guests have the option to be tutored on-site at the shelter. Although it serves a very different population, the model resembles the Long Island Shelter/Literacy Volunteers of Massachusetts Program. In this model, a tutor serves as the homeless learner's first link in re-connecting with education; he or she provides individualized, learner-centered instruction responding to learners' needs and interests. The tutoring relationship is envisaged as a supportive one, where learners can be affirmed and develop confidence along with basic skills. And the tutor/learner relationship is not tied to the shelter; it can continue after guests move into permanent housing or other educational programs. This model is attractive to the CCLC, since it is low-cost and can draw prospective tutors from the daily inquiries they get. Yet, this use of tutors as primary providers of educational services is quite different from the CCLC's usual way of incorporating tutors. At CCLC, volunteer tutors supplement classroom instruction and get weekly communication from teachers.

The Coordinator is very experienced in tutor recruitment and training. One of her goals for this program is to identify and train a core group of committed volunteer tutors, but she sees her role as more an educational advocate than a "volunteer coordinator." In addition to recruiting, training and supporting tutors, the Coordinator acts as an advocate within the CCLC for homeless learners who want to enter classes there and she connects participants with educational counseling and other CCLC services. She also tutors and counsels participants herself, as needed. In direct response to requests from YWCA and Hildebrand guests, she began teaching an innovative "everyday math" class on-site at Bigelow House.

The Coordinator is prepared to configure program offerings in whatever way best responds to homeless learners diverse needs and interests. In her view, education should address a wide range of adult learners' needs, including self-esteem, problem-solving and life skills as well as reading, writing and math. In her shelter class, she engages learners in an exploration of where they use math skills like fractions in everyday life, and how they or their kids might use them. She expects that tutors in this program will also develop curriculum around learners' interests and everyday concerns. They should also have learners set short-term goals, to be able to experience some success (in three months or less). Finally, she emphasizes that this education program must be completely voluntary: "It's fine if education is part of a contract between a shelter and a guest, but the program won't work if participation is mandatory." It is important to note that the Coordinator's approach to education is very congruent with the Learning Center's. This provides continuity and reinforcement for learners who participate in more than one learning activity or who transition from one to another.

## Distinguishing Characteristics

- The City of Cambridge organized the partnership and acts as lead agency. Partners include an African-American agency and an agency that is committed to serving women. This assures that both communities not only receive services, but have a strong voice in planning and assessing those services.

- This partnership brings together two family shelters (each operated by a private community agency) with a City-operated learning center. The project provides a potential forum for these two shelters to get to know each other and begin to coordinate in other ways to serve the same population.

- Partners in this program share similar philosophies about the role of education in empowering homeless adults. They all see education as an important part of empowerment, a means for guests to gain confidence and a measure of control over their lives. They all believe that education should address life skills as well as academic content, and that it should be voluntary.

- Project LIFT offers a mix of activities that respond to learner's multiple educational needs, as well as their schedules and preferences. It offers tutoring, on-site classes, educational counseling, mainstreaming into Learning Center classes and elsewhere, and ongoing educational advocacy.

- The Learning Center partner offers a very supportive environment for homeless learners who choose to enroll there. It emphasizes peer support as well as teacher and counselor support.

- Project LIFT has built a unique "advocacy" role into its diversified model for serving homeless learners. The Program Coordinator serves as a homeless education coordinator within the Learning Center as a whole. She advocates for homeless learners who want to enter CCLC classes, offers them ongoing support for meeting their goals and connects them to a whole range of resources inside and outside of the Learning Center. Having a staff advocate in a program with an Adult Diploma Program offers a potentially very powerful option for homeless learners. The Coordinator is advocating to get these women credit for the programs and experiences they go through in the shelter: parenting skills, housing search, and dealing with other agencies.

- The Coordinator teaches an innovative "everyday math" class weekly on-site at Bigelow House. This class was organized in response to learner's interests, and they have been fully involved in scheduling and curriculum. This class is a forum for developing group learning and peer support. It focuses on practical, problem-solving activities that don't highlight different skill levels.

- Project LIFT curriculum makes room for and responds to homeless issues, with learning activities that are grounded in who learners are, what they're facing, and where they want their lives to go. Tutors and teachers develop curriculum as needed, "growing out of what people really need on a daily basis."

## Program Strengths

- All program partners deal with homeless individuals as whole people. The YWCA and Hildebrand Shelters have marshalled a wide range of resources to meet homeless families' multiple needs and help them establish long-term health and stability. Services include: housing search, family and child advocacy, access to medical care, counseling, childcare and other services. The Community Learning Center has a long history of offering accessible and empowering educational services to all Cambridge adults.

- Project LIFT's goals for education reflect this holistic view. They also address systemic causes of homelessness as well as individual skills. The program offers education as an additional tool homeless women can use to access housing, social service and others systems, and to make these systems work for them. Project LIFT seeks to develop participants' self-esteem by providing an entirely voluntary avenue for them to take a measure of control and move forward with their lives, at a time when most other avenues are blocked. It offers women skills for helping their children succeed in school; and in the long-run, it may prove to be a first step in their own continuing education.

- Project LIFT lifts barriers that confront homeless women who seek to re-enter educational systems. It provides the kind of immediate educational response that homeless mothers need. They can't wait the six to twelve months most other program require. It also offers a personal contact for re-entry: someone who comes to the shelter, takes guests to visit the Learning Center, holds classes on-site, and offers on-going support and advocacy. The program also helps with childcare.

- Project LIFT serves all interested YWCA and Hildebrand Family Shelter residents, regardless of their skill or educational level. They have no criteria that would exclude any of these guests. For guests who are reluctant to consider education as an active possibility for them, or who have multiple other problems, shelter staff take extra time to help them consider where education might fit into their lives. They emphasize that the program should not exclude users.

- The program offers multiple options for re-connecting shelter residents with learning: individualized tutoring; Learning Center classes in basic literacy, writing, math, pre-GED, GED; the Adult Diploma Program which builds on previous course work and life experience credits; educational counseling; referrals to other education and training; and a special six-week "everyday math" class held on-site at the Bigelow House shelter. The Coordinator is prepared to configure program offerings in whatever way best responds to homeless learners' diverse needs and interests.

- Tutoring and classes are arranged at learners' convenience. Curriculum is also designed to respond to their concerns and interests. It has been very empowering for homeless learners to be asked what they want to learn and when they want to do it.

- The CCLC provides a very supportive environment for this program and for homeless learners. The Center works actively to develop caring, egalitarian relationships between teachers and learners, as well as peer support. The entire CCLC staff has been involved in making decisions about this project. They have had some training on homelessness, and several have also had homeless learners before. Supports that the Center offer to this program include specialists in learning disabilities, reading, math and ESL, an educational counselor, and learning materials, as well as space and program slots.

- The Coordinator has worked extensively with the homeless and brings to this program previous experience with the Long Island Shelter program, as well as a dual orientation to education and homelessness. She has prior experience teaching at the CCLC, and appears to be well integrated into their staff. She has defined her primary role in Project LIFT as "educational advocate" for homeless learners within the Learning Center and with other agencies. The Coordinator was complimented for her accessibility, responsiveness and flexibility. She maintains frequent contact with frontline shelter staff, particularly the family life advocates.

- At Project LIFT, educational activities in all parts of this program strive to be responsive, learner-centered and empowering. They address a wide range of adult learners' needs, including self-esteem, problem-solving and life skills as well as reading, writing and math. They engage learners in critical reflection on their own lives and the world around them. They attempt to draw out and affirm learners' own knowledge and to learn from each other. Project LIFT's educational approach is congruent with that of the Learning Center as a whole. This provides continuity and reinforcement for learners who participate in more than one learning activity or who transition from one to another.

- Goal-setting is both a means and an end for this program. Activities grow out of, and are assessed in terms of learners' goals. Project LIFT helps learners to set and assess short-term goals so they can experience some success (in three months or less).

- Project LIFT learning activities addresses homelessness in several ways. The Coordinator and tutors help learners with tasks they face as shelter residents, such as gathering documentation for a housing search. Teachers also bring common concerns like AIDS, drugs, unemployment and homelessness into the classroom, presenting them as some of the many problems class members have dealt with in their lives.

- Project LIFT has an excellent record of enrolling potential learners and retaining those it enrolls. Approximately half of the LIFT learners are African-American, and half are white.

- This program successfully builds in transition options that include ongoing support and advocacy. Students who leave the shelter may continue with any program component. The fact that most residents find housing in Cambridge or Somerville makes this realistic; most places in those communities have good access to public transport, and the

CCLC is near a subway line. Those who aren't in CCLC classes can continue with tutors or shelter classes.

- Recruiting tutors is not a problem for this program. The CCLC gets daily requests from people who want to be tutors, and Project LIFT is one of the options described to them. In two months, the Coordinator had identified 14 people interested in tutoring with this project. Criteria for tutors are shared between partners, and have been clearly stated. Tutor training will also be informed by the Coordinator's experience at the Long Island Shelter program, where she has developed an innovative approach to tutor training.

- A range of educational and other counseling services are available to learners in this program. The shelters offer ongoing contact with family life advocates and a displaced homemaker program, weekly individual meetings with a social worker, and referrals to counseling services in churches, the community guidance center, and AA or NA. The Y has also developed programs to meet guests' needs for creativity and self-expression, including sports and photography classes.

- There are no tensions about administration and money in this partnership, as there are in some. All partners see the benefits of this program and have contributed a great deal of staff time and program support beyond the required minimum.

## Concerns and Tensions

- State Policies: The major challenge Project LIFT confronts comes from budget-driven changes in State policy and regulations (particularly at the Department of Public Welfare and the Department of Public Housing) which work against this educational program. Project LIFT is committed to offering education as a voluntary option, one of the few areas where a homeless woman can exercise some control over her life; while the DPW is attempting to mandate education for residents of homeless shelters who stay beyond 90 days. The fact that guests now stay in shelters for five, six - up to eight months - could provide a window for empowering educational programs. Instead, during this period women are under continuous pressure from the State to enter education and training programs or to get jobs. Ironically, it is State policy which keeps women longer in shelters by withholding the housing vouchers that would help them move out.

  State policies on shelter funding and referrals has also stretched shelters to the limit. When battered women's shelters and drug rehabilitation programs are closed, family shelters take in their clients. The negative economic climate has also increased the incidence of battering.

- P.M. Childcare: Project LIFT has had the advantage of free childcare available mornings through the Salvation Army; yet, many residents cannot attend morning classes or tutoring sessions, and they need afternoon or evening childcare. Despite considerable effort, the program had not found a workable permanent solution for afternoon and evening childcare.

- Space: Finding appropriate space for afternoon and evening classes is another logistical constraint that is tied to childcare. Especially in the evening, shelter living rooms present too many distractions to be comfortable learning environments. Hildebrand Family Center is particularly concerned to have on-site programs offered.

- Developing a Three-Way Partnership: At the time of the visit, Project LIFT operated more as two shelter-Learning Center partnerships than as a three-way collaboration or partnership. Outside of partnership meetings, each shelter dealt separately with the Coordinator. Both shelters feel that this program should be more of a vehicle for fostering collaboration among them than it has been. More YWCA residents than Hildebrand residents were enrolled in the program, and the one on-site class, the family math, was offered at the Y's Bigelow House. Hildebrand guests were involved in tutoring, but none had enrolled in the family math class.

- Coordinator's Load: The Coordinator has been very effective in getting the program up and running in a brief period. She successfully juggles a wide variety of coordinating tasks: meeting with CLC staff, advocating for homeless students there, doing outreach to the two shelters and intake for learners, following up contacts, recruiting and training tutors, handling program administration and liaison with the State. Yet, if this program is to be effective, the Coordinator has to have sufficient time to devote to supporting and counseling learners and tutors-- a critical role. She has been doing much of the teaching and tutoring in this program, and has developed especially creative materials and approaches. Even for a small program, twenty hours per week isn't enough time to devote to all of these tasks, in the absence of clerical or other support help.

- Slots Available in Educational Programs: The Community Learning Center has been generous in offering slots in its regular programs to homeless learners, whenever those slots are available. But Project LIFT's capacity to serve homeless learners is limited to some extent by the number of slots at the Learning Center and elsewhere into which it can place participants. (ESL programs are in particularly short supply.) This grant doesn't offer anywhere near enough funding both to provide advocacy and re-entry contacts for shelter residents and to expand the number of slots available to them.

- Services to a Wide Range of Cambridge's Homeless: It is important to note that while Project LIFT is very effective in serving residents of the two partner shelters, its capacity to serve all homeless Cambridge residents is limited by the fact that it was established as a Learning Center/family shelter partnership. This presents a dilemma: the program has to be careful not to reinforce prevailing biases by extending services only to mothers and families, given that rebuilding families is generally viewed as a more acceptable mission than sheltering alcoholics and addicts. While the Shelter Provider's network offers a ready channel for outreach and referrals, additional staff and funding clearly would be needed to make expansion feasible. Further, a one-year grant offers far too small a window for institutionalizing an expanded version of this program.

- Connection to Economic Development: As the Hildebrand Shelter Director observed, for poor women, education ultimately leads nowhere unless it eventually leads to economic self-sufficiency. And racism, sexism and other social prejudices often stand between appropriately skilled women and the jobs they need for a decent life. In initiating Project LIFT, the City of Cambridge demonstrated its commitment to providing services to its neediest citizens. But to succeed, this effort must be coupled with a commitment to push local businesses towards creating and opening jobs to disadvantaged citizens.

# II. Program Design and Implementation

## Education Services

- Type and Schedule of Educational Activities

Project LIFT offers several options for a shelter resident who wants to re-connect with learning. She can be matched with a tutor and begin work at the shelter or another convenient meeting place. She can enter a class at the Learning Center as soon as a slot is available. If she is age 22 or older, she may be considered for the Adult Diploma Program, where participants earn credits for previous course work and for skills gained through life experience. If an individual has completed a lot of high school or has high skill levels, she may prepare to take one or more GED tests. She can also go to the CCLC for educational counseling and referral to other education and training, as desired. Finally, at the time of the evaluation visit, she has the option to enter a special six-week "everyday math" class that the Coordinator teaches on-site at the Bigelow House shelter. (It is likely that other such on-site classes will be developed in respond to residents interests.)

Community Learning Center classes are held from 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. and 6:30 - 9:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday. Learners generally attend class two mornings or evening a week, for a total of three hours of instruction. An intensive program is available four mornings a week. The Bigelow House math class was arranged at the guests' convenience; it is held for two hours each Friday evening. During the evaluation visit, residents were checking with the Coordinator about that class, and their enthusiasm was evident. The Shelter Director noted that it was very unusual, and very empowering, for residents to be able to schedule the class at their convenience.

Tutoring can be arranged at a convenient time and place. Childcare is available mornings at the Salvation Army; any other time, participants need to arrange for staff, other residents or someone else to watch their children. YWCA shelter residents can be tutored in private in their own apartments at any time. Hildebrand guests can use the living room during the day, but there is no quiet place for them to have evening classes. The Director suggested that perhaps evening classes or tutoring could be arranged at the Christian Life Center. Hildebrand staff is very anxious to have classes on-site, to make them more accessible and less intimidating for residents who may fear going to a strange place.

- Eligibility and Recruitment

**Eligibility**

Project LIFT will serve all interested YWCA and Hildebrand Family Shelter residents, regardless of their skill or educational level. They have no criteria that would exclude any of these guests. For guests who are reluctant to consider education as an active possibility for them, or who have multiple other problems, shelter staff take extra time to help them consider where education might fit into their lives. They emphasize that the program should not exclude users. It may take them several months to begin dealing with their substance abuse-- for example, move into a treatment program-- but education can work hand-in-hand with recovery. In their view, it may even take longer for women fleeing battering to be ready for educational services; but those services should be ready for them when they decide to begin. This program has not served any physically or mentally challenged learners. Two participants have limited English.

This program has a very inclusive approach to serving guests in the two partner shelters; but the fact that it only serves family shelters excludes, a priori, a whole range of homeless people. Rebuilding families is viewed by many as a more acceptable mission than sheltering alcoholics and addicts.

### Recruitment

The Program Coordinator initially made presentations at house meetings in both residences. Now, as people come into the shelters, they tell each other about the program. New information and updates are offered at weekly house meetings. Shelter staff also discuss this option with guests soon after they enter the shelter, usually at a second interview. Both shelters emphasize that the program cannot be mandatory. The Y feels under some pressure from the Department of Welfare to have guests enter education and training to justify staying in the shelter past 90 days; they believe mandating activities is very counterproductive for helping guests make real progress. Hildebrand does not feel under similar pressure to get people into the program. But many of their guests do come into the shelter with service plans, and staff refer to the program any guests whose service plans include education.

When staff at either shelter calls the Coordinator about an interested guest, she will come to the shelter to meet them and will take them to visit the CCLC if they want to go. All partners agree that this personal contact is critical: "In the past we've made referrals, but many guests won't cross Massachusetts Avenue to go to a strange place. Someone coming to them makes it real."

### Staff Advocacy

Project LIFT has built an important "advocacy" role into its diversified model for serving homeless learners. The Coordinator's role extends beyond organizing educational participants in this program to serving as a homeless education coordinator within the Learning Center as a whole and connecting them with a whole range of local resources. She advocates for homeless learners who want to enter CCLC classes directly, and even for several who were already enrolled when this program started. The CCLC has had previous success using this advocacy model for City hospital workers enrolled in a workplace education program. The advocate helps homeless learners to get into CCLC programs, for which there is normally a six to twelve month wait. CCLC staff observe that "getting into the pipeline is the hard part; once students are here, we work to keep and support them, regardless of funding or eligibility." Once Project LIFT learners are enrolled, the Coordinator's role is to help organize support services and to check back on whether she is making progress on her goals. The Coordinator also works on transition and follow-up.

Having a staff advocate in a program with an Adult Diploma Program offers a potentially very powerful option for homeless learners. The Coordinator is advocating to get these women credit for the programs and experiences they go through in the shelter: parenting skills, housing search, and dealing with other agencies.

- Enrollment and Retention

### Enrollment and Demographics

Project LIFT began operations in mid-February, and by May 1st it had enrolled nine learners. Eight of 13 guests whom the Coordinator spoke with at a Y house meeting came for assessment; seven enrolled in the program and one chose not to enroll. Several guests had already registered at the Learning Center on their own for GED and ADP programs. The Coordinator has taken them on and acts as their "staff advocate" within the CCLC. Six attend the "everyday math" class. Two Hildebrand guests have enrolled: one is enrolled in a CCLC satellite ESL class and also meets with the Coordinator for tutoring; a second participant is being tutored. In counting enrollment, the Coordinator includes all learners who have completed assessments and are either receiving services or waiting for appropriate services.

All Project LIFT participants so far have been women; it is possible that some men may enroll because the Hildebrand Family Center does accept intact families. Half of the LIFT learners are African-American, and half are White.

### Intake

When a learner decides to enroll-- after initial contacts at the shelter and perhaps also a visit to the CCLC-- the Program Coordinator meets with each prospective learner to discuss her interests and available program services. Based on the learner's preference, the assessment is done in the shelter or at the Learning Center. She focuses on the learner's long and short-term goals, and tries to keep the discussion informal. They complete the application together, and the Coordinator offers help as needed. Depending on her interests, a learner will take a reading inventory (IRI, WRAT or READ), a math diagnosis and/or writing sample (adapted London procedure). The Coordinator and learner go over assessments together. For low-level ESL learners, the Coordinator follows an "ESL chat" format to assess speaking and comprehension.

### Confidentiality

The advocate model offers a creative solution to the tension between maintaining confidentiality and meeting homeless learners' support needs. The entire CCLC staff knows about Project LIFT and has been involved in making decision about this project. They have had some training in homelessness, and several have also had homeless learners before. The project does not identify learners as homeless. They believe that learners need to decide for themselves whether to tell teachers or other students that they are living in a shelter. This approach seems to have worked well so far for two key reasons: first, having an advocate within the learning center makes it easy for learners to get continuous support and to resolve any problems that may come up in class. In addition, the CCLC's supportive learning environment affirms what students have learned from their various life experiences. It actively engages learners in discussing community problems and social justice issues, and it vigorously develops peer support. This will be discussed further under "Learning Environment."

### Retention

So far, Project LIFT has an excellent record of retaining the learners it enrolls. In two months of program operation, three participants have moved out of the shelter; one is on hold, on a waiting list for an ESL class; another has transferred to SCALE in Somerville; and a third is continuing at CCLC. In the current fiscal climate, with no housing vouchers available, guests stay much longer in both the Y and Hildebrand. This gives the program a window of between five and eight months to engage learners. The fact that most shelter guests move into permanent housing in Cambridge or Somerville is an important advantage in retaining learners. The CCLC and SCALE, its sister program in Somerville, have successfully coordinated services for several homeless learners.

- Learning Activities, Curriculum and Learning Environment

The Program Coordinator is very committed to developing responsive and learner-centered activities in all parts of this program. This is congruent with the CCLC's overall approach to adult education. Although the CCLC uses a very eclectic mix of adult learning methods and materials, they are informed by consistent and deeply held principles:

- Students' interests and life experiences will inform instruction as much as possible;
- Instruction and discussions will draw out and affirm what students already know;
- Across the curriculum, materials and activities will address life skills in relevant areas such as parenting, housing, landlords and tenant rights;
- Teaching will encourage students to think critically and draw their own conclusions;
- Reading and writing will be integrated, and process writing will be introduced for individual and group writing activities (for example, a learner will write a book about her life that she can read to her child); and
- Students will be encouraged to write for self-expression, using dialogue journals, dictating language experience stories or writing poems and stories about their lives.

### Curriculum

There is no special curriculum for Cambridge learners who are homeless; yet, curriculum makes room for and responds to homeless issues, with learning activities that are grounded in who learners are, what they're facing, and where they want their lives to go. Tutors and teachers develop curriculum as needed, "growing out of what people really need on a daily basis." The Learning Center first places students in classes based on their reading level; writing is taught along with reading. Specialized instruction is available for the many beginning ABE students who are dyslexic. Math instruction is individualized and self-paced. It includes concept and skills development, as well as experiences of applying skills to real life problems. ESL instruction "integrates speaking, listening, reading and writing skills in practical contexts." Classes use a mix of materials, many of which are teacher-generated. They often address current events and social issues. Learners who choose tutoring receive individualized instruction in reading, writing and/or math, depending on their needs and interests.

Participants who chose the Bigelow House family math class also had an active part in developing their own curriculum. The course was created to respond to their interest in learning math for everyday purposes and to help their kids in school. The group considered together: "Where do we use math in our everyday lives?" The curriculum incorporates concrete materials and applications like check-cashing, bank accounts, and taxes rather than paper-and-pencil exercises. The class represents a range of skill levels. The Coordinator, who teaches this class, creates activities to engage the entire group in problem-solving and learning from each other, rather than highlighting individual skill levels. The class also talks about exploitation and empowerment as it comes into banking, grocery shopping and other activities, as well as housing.

Homelessness comes into the Project LIFT curriculum in several ways. The Coordinator and tutors try to help learners with tasks they face as shelter residents, such as gathering documentation for a housing search. The Coordinator finds that: "Guests are pretty aware of the housing situation and process; they also have structured housing search meetings in both shelters. I can help by learning about what systems they have to deal with and focusing on how to get through the systems." Learning Center classes also include homelessness and housing issues in the curriculum, presenting this as one among many problems class members have dealt with in their lives.

### Goal-Setting

The LIFT program believes that it is important for learners to experience success, to be able to say: "I did this." The Coordinator helps learners set achievable, short-term goals. With a woman who wants to learn word processing, the Coordinator set up a four-week practice schedule; with another who wanted to finish her Associate's degree, she helped set up a strategy for getting back into college. With family math class students, she works with the group to define goals that can be achieved in six weeks-- for example, mastering fractions. Goal-setting is both a means and an end for this program. Activities grow out of, and are assessed in terms of learners' goals. The Y Shelter Director emphasizes that education must flow from guests' goals: guests often have big dreams, but no stepping stones to them. In her view, teachers and tutors need to help learners articulate their own skill needs and plan how to meet them. Many learners are still in their teens and "still in rebellion;" they will refuse to learn things that are prescribed for them. The program does not see adult education as necessarily connected to jobs or vocational training; they address that only as it comes up for a learner. An academic and career counselor is available at the Learning Center, and the Coordinator also does counseling in fields she knows.

### Learning Environment: The Community Learning Center

A deep well of support is available for homeless learners to tap into, if they choose to. The CCLC's educational counselor emphasized that "students and teachers at the Learning Center care about each other." Getting to know each other is highly valued. Having largely full-time teachers and an open entry/open exit policy for learners make it easier to build relationships. Teachers and learners who have been at the Center for years are conscious of reaching out to short-term students and part-time staff. Teachers work to create a climate where learners and staff are equalized, where it is safe to talk about what is going on in their lives. They regularly bring current events and common problems like AIDS, drugs and homelessness into the classroom.

The Center also works actively to develop peer support, beginning with a weekly support group that all Basic Literacy students attend. By the time these students have moved into pre-GED and GED classes, the support group is right in the class. The educational counselor observed that "homeless students have no problem in classes here, because they're right in with lots of different kinds of groups. Everybody has some kind of issue or problem, so homelessness is not a big deal. Everybody gets equalized." Because their referral source is confidential, homeless learners have the option to let other class members know about their status, or not to.

#### On-Site Activities at the Shelters

The family math class at Bigelow House has also created a comfortable learning environment where existing peer support fosters group learning and peer tutoring. On the day of the site visit, a Tuesday, participants were enthusiastically planning for the upcoming Friday class; they talked with the Coordinator and shelter worker about childcare arrangements. They had scheduled the class at a time when all six interested guests could attend. Within the class, learners with different levels of math skill help each other work through exercises on shared concerns like banking, rent, etc.

Classes and tutoring sessions held in-house at the shelters do confront a number of obstacles. In the evenings, children and other distractions make it hard to focus on learning in the common spaces. However, a number of guests prefer evening classes since they are engaged in housing search and keeping other appointments during the day. All partners are working on resolving this problem. The YWCA has identified two classroom areas in the main residence; Hildebrand is looking into the possibility of using St. Paul's Christian Life Center when free. They feel particularly strongly that classes should be offered on-site.

### • Student Assessment

Project LIFT is clear that measuring "how much somebody has learned" is not really what it's after. As a new program, it has begun to consider how outcomes other than academic progress can be assessed. The Coordinator monitors learners' progress towards meeting their goals; she is developing a "self-assessment" form that learners can use to assess their program and to set new short-term goals. Overall student assessment is conducted by individual teachers, who are sensitive to self-esteem and social skills, as well as academic progress. In addition, Hildebrand staff suggested that they may ask the Coordinator for monthly updates on learners' progress. They think it would be advisable to hold formal progress evaluations for each student after 90 days in the program.

### • Teacher and Tutor Training and Support

#### Teacher Training and Support

The Community Learning Center has resolved many issues that make it hard for adult education programs to attract and keep skilled teachers. First, the CCLC employs mainly full-time teachers. It also offers them many opportunities for skills development and involvement in educational programming: developing curriculum and materials (often for publication); coordinating a component area (ESL, Math, Social Studies); participating in management and decisionmaking; and developing new programs (e.g. by writing proposals in areas that interest them). Teachers stay a long time at the Learning Center. One staff member observed that: "When a teacher leaves here it is usually to direct a program somewhere else." In addition to hand-on skills development in new areas, teachers have many opportunities to attend training workshops in-house, at the Adult Literacy Resource Institute (ALRI) and elsewhere. Project LIFT's Coordinator has recently drawn on several of these options. She is working with the ESL Coordinator on a training video to improve her skills at using the ESL diagnostic, and she attended an eight-week problem-solving math course at ALRI.

### Tutor Recruitment and Selection

As discussed, Project LIFT was originally envisaged as a tutoring model, where homeless learners could receive individualized instruction from volunteer tutors and could continue with them after they leave the shelter. In practice, this program was broadened to include a variety of educational options. At the time of the visit, the tutoring component was just beginning to get off the ground. Tutors would be available for one-on-one instruction alone or as an adjunct to classes (the usual CCLC model, where volunteers report to and receive feedback from teachers weekly).

Recruiting tutors is not a problem for this program. The CCLC gets daily requests from people who want to be tutors, and Project LIFT is one of the options described to them. In two months, the Coordinator had identified 14 people interested in tutoring with this project. At the time of the visit, she had screened three experienced tutors and had matched one with a participant from the Y shelter. She was planning a tutor training for the new tutors, after which they would be matched with learners.

All three partners have clear criteria for tutors who are working with homeless adults. Tutors must be able to commit three hours each week for at least a year. They also need a range of personal qualities: prospective tutors must be patient, reliable and sensitive to learners' needs and concerns. They must be non-judgmental and flexible in dealing with learners' problems or schedule constraints. (The Coordinator eliminated one experienced tutor because she found her too judgmental.) Further, tutors should feel comfortable in the shelter and, to gain a sense of what homeless people's lives are like, be aware of the special stress a person undergoes when living in a shelter with eight or nine strangers. Finally, to be effective with homeless learners, tutors need to be in touch with their preconceived ideas about homelessness, and be capable of fully accepting these learners and their concerns.

### Tutor Training and Support

The Community Learning Center's regular training will be adapted for this program. It will also be informed by the Coordinator's experience at the Long Island Shelter program, where she has developed an innovative approach to tutor training. Training will be offered in two five-hour sessions (probably on Saturdays), with a visit to the Learning Center and the shelters in between. The CCLC Basic Training (adapted for ESL or ABE tutors) includes information on ABE or ESL literacy and literacy learners; the adult learning process and how it differs from children's learning; and what theories and methods inform teaching at the CCLC. It also includes experience and skill building in assessment, lesson preparation, process writing, teaching techniques and materials. The Coordinator intends to train more tutors than the program will need, so learners can be matched with the most appropriate tutors.

The Coordinator and shelter partners will develop a special training component for tutors in this program. Shelter staff will talk about homelessness and working with homeless parents; they will also introduction prospective tutors to the shelters. Training will probe tutors' experience with and attitudes towards the homeless. Finally, to avoid setting unrealistic expectations, it will anticipate common problems, like learners missing tutoring sessions.

The Program Coordinator will be available to tutors to offer support. The program also has the option of adopting the CCLC's weekly report and monitoring format. This report has space for tutor's questions to a teacher (or Coordinator), and the teachers' comments to the tutor.

- Outcomes

After only two months of operation, Project LIFT had yielded a variety of positive outcomes. Three participants who have moved out of the shelter had all stayed connected to some kind of education: one was still at CCLC, one was on a waiting list for an ESL class, one had transferred to SCALE. The program had enrolled a high proportion of residents in the partner shelters (nine learners from a pool of around 20), and those who enrolled had stuck with it. Shelter staff saw excitement among residents about the program; it was especially positive for them to be asked what they wanted to learn and when. "Many of them have a hard time conceiving of needs of their own that aren't kids, husbands' or boyfriends' needs." This kind of input has increased guests' motivation to learn, and their general sense of control over their lives.

Shelter Directors commented that the program had helped participants develop self-confidence and feel like they were moving forward with their lives, instead of stagnating while they awaited permanent housing. Based on the sense of capability and success they've gained from Project LIFT, several women have made clear plans for further schooling. At the Y shelter, the education program has also helped change the atmosphere from punitive to hopeful. Staff also feel better about their work.

## Program Organization

- Partnership

Project LIFT has the advantage of bringing together three agencies with similar philosophies about the role of education in empowering homeless adults. They all see education as an important part of empowerment, a means for guests to gain confidence and a measure of control over their lives. They all believe that education should address life skills as well as academic content, and that it should be voluntary. Beyond this, the three partners are all well-known and respected in the community. They were all familiar with each other's work before they came together around this initiative. All partners agree that the City of Cambridge's Department of Human Services has played a very positive role in coordinating the partnership and acting as the lead agency for this grant.

This partnership has the further advantage of including an African-American agency and an agency that is committed to serving women. This assures that both communities not only receive services, but have a strong voice in planning and assessing those services.

While this partnership grows out of a shared approach and is generally effective for overall program operation, the agencies involved would like to see it evolve more into a three-way collaboration. As mentioned, at the time of the visit Project LIFT operated more as two shelter-Learning Center partnerships than as a three-way partnership. Outside of partnership meetings, each shelter has dealt separately with the

Coordinator. There were no occasions when guests from the two shelters come together for classes or other activities. Both shelters feel that this program could be more of a vehicle for fostering collaboration among them than it has been. The two family shelters were established around the same time, two years ago, and know each other a little from the Shelter Provider's Network. They have an interest in getting to know each other well, since they are subject to similar rules and trends and also often end up with each other's former clients. The major factors they saw as impediments to collaboration were their own busy schedules and the lack of contact between frontline staff at the two shelters. The partners are seeking ways to involve frontline staff in decisions about program operation.

## • Coordination and Management

### Coordination

In the first two months of program operation, the Coordinator has convened two meetings with shelter directors. (She is aiming for a partnership meeting every six weeks.) These meetings addressed program-level concerns, like recruitment, intake procedures, assessment, tutors, supplies and state concerns. The Coordinator is also in frequent contact with frontline shelter staff, particularly the family life advocates. The advocates call the Coordinator to refer prospective learners to the program to inform them about individuals' interests and/or service plans. She visits the shelters for discussions with prospective students and staff, and to conduct classes. Most information about learners' concerns or progress is exchanged in these informal meetings. Hildebrand staff recommended that the Coordinator update them on learner progress at their monthly staff meetings, and that after 90 days in the program an individual's progress be assessed.

### Management

There are no tensions about administration and money in this partnership, as there are in some. Although they are not compensated through grant funding, shelters see the benefits of this program and have contributed considerable staff time to planning, recruitment and program support. They also provide space for in-house classes and help with childcare as needed. The Learning Center has offered the Program Coordinator space, a phone and all the other supports CCLC teachers enjoy. They have also enrolled a number of learners referred through this program. The grant funds only learning materials, supplies and copying. The Coordinator has been protective of the shelter staff's limited time, and careful not to burden shelter partners with administrative concerns. She also keeps them updated on statewide meetings.

Learners have direct input into program scheduling and curriculum. The CCLC has a learner advisory board, but it does not yet include learners from this program.

### Staffing

Shelter staff complimented the Coordinator for her accessibility, responsiveness and flexibility. They observed that guests and families are very comfortable with her.

The Coordinator's broad vision of the diverse educational services this program can offer homeless learners has created a wide range of roles for her. In only 20 hours each week, she must meet with CCLC staff, advocate for homeless students there, do outreach to the two shelters and intake for learners, follow up contacts, recruit and train tutors, handle program administration and liaison with the State, and offer counseling and support to learners and tutors. She also teaches and tutors. The Coordinator's load has been aggravated by the fact that Project LIFT got off to a late start and she had to make an intense effort to get it up and running. The Coordinator was hired in February and educational services started in March.

- Support Services

### Childcare

Childcare has been a partly a support and partly a limitation for Project LIFT. The program has the advantage of a pre-existing childcare program available to any guest every morning (9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.) at the nearby Salvation Army. Yet, many guests prefer afternoon and evening classes; they have housing search and other business to conduct in the mornings and cannot commit to a class then. The shelter staff encourages guests to arrange afternoon and evening childcare among themselves or with relatives, but they often end up watching children while a mother is tutored or attends class. The six students in the Friday evening family math class have been arranging childcare, with some help from staff. Childcare needs make it preferable to hold afternoon and evening classes in the shelters, even if space there isn't adequate.

### Counseling

A range of educational and other counseling services are available to learners in this program. The shelters offer ongoing contact with family life advocates and a displaced homemaker program, weekly individual meetings with a social worker, and referrals to counseling services in churches, the community guidance center, and AA or NA. The Y shelter director emphasized that Project LIFT needs to be careful about not confusing roles by going deeply into sensitive issues in the classroom. At the Y, they do not do intensive counseling themselves, but instead connect guests to outside programs. In their view: "It would be dangerous to turn a class into talking about a battering situation."

The Learning Center has an educational and career counselor who can discuss educational options, offer financial aid advice, and help get learners into other education and training. The Program Coordinator acts as an ongoing educational advocate and counselor for Project LIFT participants. Peer and teacher support is also available.

### Other Educational Programs

The shelters offer a range of other educational services that complement Project LIFT in offering a holistic approach to meeting homeless learners' needs. Both shelters offer programs to help guests expand their parenting skills. The Y also has career workshops, health workshops from visiting nurses, a photography class and other classes. Many of these could be considered sources of credits for learners enrolled in the Adult Diploma Program. A librarian goes into Hildebrand weekly to read to children; this could easily be coupled with program activities to involve mothers in reading to their children.

### Incentives and Barriers to Participation

#### Incentives

This program offers several incentives to learners. It offers them open entry to a variety of educational services, when most local programs have waiting lists or more rigid eligibility criteria. Options include: one-on-one and group learning; on-site activities or referrals; reading, writing, math and life skills at all levels, as well as GED or diploma preparation, educational counseling and advocacy. In addition, the learning activities and environments this program provides are learner-centered, responsive and supportive. Daycare is available part of each day.

#### Barriers

There are relatively few programmatic barriers to keep residents of the YWCA and Hildebrand shelters from participating in Project LIFT. The major barriers are recent budget-driven changes in state policy and regulations (particularly at the Department of Public Welfare and the Department of Public Housing) which work against this educational program. Project LIFT is committed to offering education as a voluntary option, one of the few areas where a homeless woman can exercise some control over her life. Partners believe that mandating education makes it another command that saps women's self-esteem and motivation. At the same time, the DPW is attempting to do just that: to mandate education for residents of homeless shelters. Once they pass the traditional 90 day limit, guests at the YWCA shelter receive official letters every week threatening to make them leave the shelter if they don't enter education or training programs or aggressively look for jobs. With the freeze on Section 707 and Section 8 housing vouchers, the average shelter stay has almost doubled, from around three months to five, six, even eight months.

Not only are family shelter guests staying longer, but they also have more serious problems than in the past. Changes in referral and funding policies have brought in more battered women and children, substance abusers and others with multiple serious problems. The family shelters and the educational program are stretched to the limit in the effort to learn new skills and make new contacts for providing guests with services they need.

Beyond these policy-level tensions, there are also a few factors that limit the quality and quantity of services this very comprehensive and responsive program can provide. Space and childcare are logistical constraints partners are trying to solve. The Coordinator is the hub through which virtually all program information passes. This puts a considerable burden on her, and limits opportunities for frontline shelter staff to connect with each other around program operation. In addition, Project LIFT's capacity to serve homeless learners is limited to some extent by the number of slots at the Learning Center and elsewhere into which it can refer participants. ESL programs are in particularly short supply. Further, a one-year grant provides far too short a period to institutionalize a program and partnership like this.

It is important to note that while Project LIFT is very effective in serving residents of the two partner shelters, its capacity to serve all homeless Cambridge residents is limited by the fact that it was established as a Learning Center/family shelter partnership. This program has to be careful that it does not reinforce prevailing stereotypes of the homeless by extending services only to mothers and families, the group among the homeless that society finds most "acceptable" and worthy of help. Staff are interested in expanding the program, but there are concerns that it needs to be operating well and that it have adequate capacity before doing so.

- Transition and Follow-Up

### Transition

This program successfully builds in transition options that include ongoing support and advocacy. Learners who enroll at the Community Learning Center can continue indefinitely there with no question of how their slots are funded. The Coordinator is an effective advocate for getting learners past waiting lists and into the CCLC, as well as supporting them through that transition process. The learning environment homeless learners enter at the CCLC is also highly supportive; it creates an egalitarian climate where all kinds of problems are discussed and accepted, with both peer support and teacher support generously available. Participants who are waiting for slots or who don't want to go into the Center have the option of individualized tutoring, the family math class or educational counseling.

Students who leave the shelter may continue with any program component. The fact that most residents find housing in Cambridge or Somerville makes this realistic; most places in those communities have good access to public transport, and the CCLC is near a subway line. Those who aren't in CCLC classes can continue with tutors or shelter classes; the program is also trying to find ways to keep open their option to get help going into the CCLC when they feel ready. Participants have the option of coming back to the shelter-- to take advantage of the Salvation Army childcare-- or meeting tutors elsewhere. The Coordinator makes contracts with participants who move out of the shelter: one woman made a contract to continue tutoring with her through June. Another participant who moved to Somerville was enrolled in the Adult Learning Center there (SCALE). The program is also considering how learning groups such as the family math class could be maintained after the transition out of the shelter.

### Follow-Up

The shelters and the educational programs all try to do follow-up with guests who leave the shelter for six months to a year. Yet, all have very limited time and resources to do follow up. Another important kind of follow-up that is limited by staff time is follow-up with guests who expressed interested but didn't feel ready to enter the program at the initial contact.

- Program Assessment

This program was in a very early stage, program assessment had not yet become a pressing concern. A Learning Center administrator expressed the opinion that "a lot of program assessment will come out of looking at individual student goals and needs, and how well the program is meeting them." She commented that the best way to assess would be to ask students, tutors and shelter providers how well the program was meeting their goals and needs. One avenue would be to use exit interviews with participants leaving the program or the shelter. Enrollment will be another indicator of success: if learners feel good about what they're doing, they will recruit each other.

The number of participants who stay with the program after they leave the shelters will also provide data.

Program assessment and major decisions about Project LIFT will be considered by the Learning Center staff, shelter directors, and the City Department of Human Services.

- Expansion and Innovation of Services

This is a very new program, and it made impressive progress in only two months of operation. At the two month point, the program was more concerned with improving the effectiveness of its partnership and the multiple services it offered than it was in expansion or innovation.

Several expansion or innovation concerns were raised:

- At what point is it appropriate for this program to consider expanding beyond two shelters? How much should the program try to become stable and fully active in the two partner shelters before it expands, to avoid becoming fragmented? Outreach mechanisms are already in place, and the need is there; through the Shelter Providers Network, the Coordinator is already getting referrals from other shelters.
- How can the program integrate a strong volunteer pool into this program? Although tutor training had not been held at the time of the visit, it was already clear that a larger volunteer pool was available than this program could effectively use.
- How can Project LIFT use education as a lever to push cities and businesses to address the fundamental question of opening job opportunities to poor women and people of color?

## III. Recommendations to Project Lift and to the State

- State Policies: The Department of Public Welfare and the Department of Public Housing should be aware of the counterproductive impact their mandates for education, training and jobs have on programs like LIFT, which are attempting to engage homeless women in the long-term process of building skills and confidence that will ultimately make them economically self-sufficient. If housing vouchers cannot be made available and residents are forced to spend twice as long in shelters as they used to, these agencies could at least stop harassing homeless women with mandates; the residents might then be able to use this time productively working towards long-term goals.

- Connection to Economic Development: To make this program successful in empowering homeless women to take more control of their lives, the City of Cambridge must make every effort to couple it with economic development. In addition to creating jobs and developing homeless residents' skills, they must address the racial, gender and other prejudices that keep such jobs beyond the reach of women like those in the shelter.

- Slots Available in Educational Programs: This grant, and the State adult education system as a whole, should consider funding an expanded number of slots in educational centers (such as the Cambridge Community Learning Center) that are already offering supportive and empowering programs appropriate for homeless adults. Funding for ongoing advocacy and re-entry contacts targeted to shelter residents must also be maintained.

- P.M. Childcare and Space: Project LIFT should continue to seek solutions to the need for afternoon/evening childcare and appropriate learning spaces. It should consider experimenting with a class on-site at Hildebrand; or, alternatively, bring learners from both residencies together in a class at one site.

- Developing a Three-Way Partnership: The program should continue its efforts to hold formal partnership meetings every six weeks, and perhaps should seek ways to involve frontline shelter staff in these meetings, in addition to shelter directors. Within the stringent limits on shelter staff time, Project LIFT should seeks ways to engage staff from both shelters together in problem-solving for this program. This might take some of the burden off the Coordinator to be the vehicle for all information flow. It might also make this program more of a vehicle for fostering collaboration among them than it has been.

- Coordinator's Load: Coordination, advocacy, liaison, curriculum development and teaching are making superhuman demands on the Program Coordinator. The program might consider some of the plentiful volunteer labor to be used to help with routine tasks and free up her time for contact with learners.

- Services to a Wide Range of Cambridge's Homeless: Project LIFT should consider what kinds of resources it would need to expand this program to other Cambridge shelters and homeless residents: more staff time for coordination and administration? Funded program slots? A pool of teachers as well as tutors? More space? Someone to do follow-up? The program's overall approach to education, as well as its unique "advocacy plus other options" model seems well suited for serving almost any needs and interests homeless people would bring. It might consider whether stabilizing the program in two shelters will necessarily strengthen its capacity to respond on a broader scale.

Evaluation Completed by: Mary Jo Connelly

Date of Site Visit: May 1, 1990

# HOMELESS EDUCATION AND LITERACY PROJECT (H.E.L.P.)

## SCALE - SOMERVILLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS
## AND
## SOMERVILLE HOMELESS COALITION, INC.

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# STATISTICAL PROFILE

Demographics: N = 8

Seventy-one and four-tenths percent of the Learners surveyed in the SCALE program were females with children. Over half stated they were single; 14.3% were married. The majority of those surveyed were between the ages of 21-25. Seventy-one and four-tenths percent of those surveyed were white and all participants spoke English most frequently. Seventy-one and four-tenths percent reported living in Massachusetts over 10 years.

When asked where they slept the past 6 months, 42.9% reported sleeping in shelters; 14.3% lived in their own apartment; and 42.9% reported living with family or friends. Eighty-five and seven-tenths percent reported living in shelters presently and indicated that this was their first use of a shelter. Over half reported leaving their last permanent home due to family problems.

The majority of persons indicated that public assistance was their main source of income, but less than half were receiving AFDC, WIC, Medicaid, and food stamps. Twenty-eight percent were working full-time. All learners indicated that they had worked in the past. Forty-two and nine-tenths percent indicated that they were currently looking for work.

Education

Seventy-one and four-tenths percent of those surveyed had completed at least 10 grades of school. Forty-two and nine-tenths percent had completed 12 grades or a GED. All of those interviewed reported that they had not been in an adult education program previously.

The majority of those interviewed indicated that this was their first time in the program and that they had been in the program a minimum of 4 weeks. The majority of persons found out about the program from a shelter counselor. The majority of learners reported enrolling in the program to get a GED.

All of those surveyed reported that the program was giving them what they expected and that they expected to learn skills to get a GED. The majority reported that they were studying for the GED.

Learners indicated that there was nothing about the program they wanted to change. Respondents indicated that they especially liked the teachers, and that there was no pressure.

When asked if they felt they had changed, the majority felt that they had. The most frequent indicators of change were: not embarrassed by what I do not know; excited about learning and want to learn more; more self-confidence; and write and do math better.

All of the learners stated that they like having the program as part of the shelter and no one indicated that it was hard to come to the program.

Over half reported that they would like to continue taking classes after they leave the shelter and added that good daycare and transportation would help them to continue. Most learners indicated that they would like to take GED classes. Twenty-eight and six-tenths percent indicated that they would like to attend college.

# PROGRAM PROFILE

## I. Program Summary

### History and Context

The Homeless Education and Literacy Project (H.E.L.P) was initiated in January 1990 by SCALE, the Somerville Public Schools' Adult Learning Center, in collaboration with the Somerville Homeless Coalition, Inc., and with the endorsement of the Mayor's Office for Human Services and the Advisory Committee on Homelessness. The H.E.L.P. initiative was funded by a McKinney Adult Education for the Homeless Grant to serve an annual total of 25 homeless residents in two shelters operated by the Somerville Homeless Coalition. Project H.E.L.P was designed to respond to the whole range of education and training needs residents in those facilities bring-- a diverse range, given that one shelter serves young families and the other serves single homeless adults of all ages. The Cross Street Shelter provides housing and transitional services for up to six adults and their children (in one and two-parent families) at a time, while the Chapel Street Shelter accommodates eight single homeless individuals (4 women and four men). Each facility serves approximately 25 guests annually.

In its first four months of operation, Project H.E.L.P. enrolled 10 of the 13 guests residing at these two shelters. H.E.L.P piloted a mixed model for responding to different clients' needs: young mothers are enrolled in a special class on-site at the Cross Street shelter, with childcare available; and Chapel St. residents go into regular ABE, GED ESL and word processing classes at SCALE. H.E.L.P. students draw on the full range of other SCALE services, including counseling, assistance with resumes and job search, and referrals to other education and training programs. These diverse services are unified by a strong partnership between SCALE and Shelter Staff, and by SCALE's deep commitment to making education accessible, responsive and empowering for each and every homeless individual who comes through the two shelters.

Staff have found that guests' learning needs and interests reflect the circumstances that have made them homeless. At the time of the visit, H.E.L.P. learners included: a number of pregnant teens and teen mothers who had dropped out of high school, many of whom had themselves grown up in welfare families; a disabled young man with an interest in computers and some computer skills; a middle-aged women who had lost her typist's job of 20 years but could not find a new position that didn't require computer skills; a mentally retarded young man; a former businesswoman who had lost everything due to several crises; and an Ethiopian refugee who was college educated in her country. Although SCALE is prepared to work with whatever concerns guests bring, neither shelter in this partnership accepts guests with active substance abuse problems.

SCALE's ABE Program Administrator and ABE/GED Counselor share responsibility for program coordination and operation. Shelter managers assist with recruitment, support and on-going problem-solving. A Teacher/ Counselor teaches in the Cross St. Shelter five hours/week and a childcare worker is available on-site during that period. The MCKinney Grant funds slots for four students/week at SCALE, and homeless learners bypass the Center's normal waiting list. It also provides for two students to go through the Adult

Diploma Program, where adults can draw on their life experience to gain credits towards a diploma.

- SCALE: The Lead Agency

SCALE is well-established community learning center that has offered services to Somerville adults since 1974. SCALE is committed to offering a range of educational services that meet the needs and interests of Somerville adults. The agency emphasizes the importance of responding to learners as adults, as people who bring a wealth of knowledge and experience into the classroom. SCALE believes that, in order to be empowering, adult education must draw out learners' knowledge and address their concerns and interests. At SCALE, student goal-setting is an important part of every program. Classes use a mix of individualized and group learning strategies, with a heavy emphasis on formats that make it possible for students to learn from each other. Teachers work to create an open, trusting climate in the classroom. SCALE has structured its ABE, GED, ESL and other programs to balance responsiveness with accountability. Each program has developed frameworks and assessment processes for monitoring students' progress and making the best use of their learning time.

SCALE offers free services to over 1,000 individuals each year in a wide range of areas: Adult Basic Education (ABE); adult Alternative Diploma Program; GED preparation; English as a Second Language (ESL); citizenship preparation; office skills training; data entry/word processing; individual tutoring; home-based tutoring; on-site ABE/ESL/GED instruction at both locations of Somerville's public housing developments; and ESL instruction at Somerville High School. Classes and individualized instruction are provided from 8:30 am to 9:00 pm, to accommodate learners' schedules. Learners can also meet with a guidance counselor and job developer. SCALE operates specialized programs through a range of contracts with the several divisions of the State Department of Education, JTPA, Bay State Skills Corp., the Executive Office of Communities and Development, Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission and others agencies.

SCALE is part of the Somerville School System, but it has considerable autonomy, since 60% of the agency's funding comes from outside grants and contracts– 20 different sources. (SCALE is currently facing a cut of $73,000 in its funding from the City– about 1/3 of the funds it receives from that source). SCALE has its own 10-person advisory committee, which includes representatives from community agencies, adult education and employment training services, a lead teacher and two students. The agency has a staff of 23 full-time employees and 60 part-time employees. Staff are organized into five program areas, each with a Program Administrator (PA). In Adult Basic Ed, for example, 14 teachers report to the PA. All SCALE employees are unionized, which is very unusual for an adult learning center.

SCALE is located in a very bright and attractive space, on the ground floor of a newly renovated City building that also houses other service agencies. The SCALE complex includes classrooms, offices, meeting rooms, a computer center and open spaces. Visitors get a lively feeling for the "business" of this place from poster-size black and white photos that show SCALE teacher and students at work. The SCALE facility is handicapped accessible. It is easy to reach, only two blocks from the MBTA red line and directly on a bus route.

The H.E.L.P proposal attached a sheaf of support letters from public and private agencies, attesting to the high level of respect SCALE enjoys in the community among those working with disadvantaged adults, including many involved with the homeless. One shelter manager confirmed that "I am very familiar with the programs SCALE offers and how successful they have been, as I have serviced many of your clients in their housing search." SCALE has been matched with public and private organizations in many collaborative endeavors. These include several ethnic associations: the Somerville Portuguese American League and the Haitian American League. SCALE bumper stickers make it clear that being associated with this agency is a source of pride.

SCALE was very interested in the H.E.L.P. initiative as a way to "get directly into the network of homeless services." It had some experience working with homeless adults, since guests from several shelters had studied at SCALE. The agency had 15 years experience working with disadvantaged adults facing many of the same problems shelter residents face; but SCALE staff were very aware that they needed to learn about homeless adults' specific needs, and to develop new strategies for serving them. The first year McKinney funding was available, SCALE submitted a proposal to work with a wide range of homeless adults and youth in collaboration with the Mayor's Office of Human Services, which deals extensively with Somerville's homeless residents and those in danger of becoming homeless. Among other activities, the Office of Human Services organizes the Mayor's Advisory Committee on Homelessness, a comprehensive group that includes representatives from all Somerville shelters and most health, human services and housing agencies serving the homeless, as well as the religious and business communities, various advocacy groups and several past and present homeless individuals. The first year proposal was rejected, in part because it did not include a "partnership" with a specific shelter.

The 1990 proposal, which was funded, establishes a direct link with the Somerville Homeless Coalition and its two shelters. The initiative was designed with input from the Advisory Committee, of which SCALE and the Coalition are both members; H.E.L.P. clearly reflects a broad community perspective and a long-term view of what it will take to end homelessness. Although not official "partners," the Mayor's Office of Human Services and the Advisory Committee on Homelessness offer ongoing advice and support to the H.E.L.P. initiative.

- Somerville Homeless Coalition, Inc.

SCALE's partner in the H.E.L.P. initiative, the Somerville Homeless Coalition, Inc., was established in 1985 and currently operates two small facilities: a shelter for single adults at Chapel Street, near Davis Square; and a family shelter at Cross Street, on Somerville's east side. The two shelters operate 24-hours aday, 365 days per year to provide emergency shelter and transitional services to homeless individuals. Both facilities offer meals, medical and mental health services, education and job referrals. Each offers services that respond to its guests' special concerns, for example parenting issues at Cross Street or immigration at Chapel Street. Both shelters use case management. Neither works with substance abusers: guests must be sober or clean at least three months (Chapel St. will take some individuals who have been released from de-tox and are waiting to enter a half-way program). They also cannot offer services to people who are severely mentally ill or who are fleeing battering; other local shelters offer specialized services to these groups.

Besides operating two shelters, the Coalition is very involved in advocacy for Somerville's homeless population. It communicates information about homeless concerns to a wide range of state and local agencies, and sits on a number of advisory and coordinating bodies. The Coalition raises much of its funds from private donors. It employs a full-time staff of 27.

- The Chapel Street Shelter

The Chapel Street Shelter is located on the ground floor of the College Avenue United Methodist Church building, only several blocks from SCALE. The shelter serves single homeless men and women age 18 and over, most of them homeless for the first time. It has a comfortable sitting room with sofas, a television and bookshelves, a women's bedroom with four beds, a men's bedroom with four beds, a bath and several offices. The shelter shares a kitchen with the church community. Guests are referred by the City Hall Office of Human Services (OHS), the State Department of Public Welfare (DPW) and Catholic Charities. Chapel St. gets more than 400 referrals each year, but has space to serve only about 25 people.

The Chapel Street shelter helps homeless individuals "get back on their feet." The Shelter Manager helps guests identify and work toward goals for independent living: finding a job, finding housing, and saving money to get into that housing. She also helps build up guests' confidence and their belief in their own capabilities. A social worker comes in weekly to counsel guests 1-on-1; they can also be referred to outside counseling services. Staff also help guests to access benefits and services for which they are eligible, such as SSI, disability, Massachusetts Rehabilitation and veterans' assistance. After 6-8 weeks at Chapel St., most guests return to living on their own.

- The Cross Street Shelter

The Cross Street Shelter is also located in a church facility, upstairs from a chapel and Bible study rooms. Mothers and children gather in a large, bright room that has sofas, a television, and shelves with a selection of adult and children's books. A long dining table stands on one side of this room where guests serve meals they have prepared in an adjacent kitchen. Mothers can play with their children in a separate playroom, and a childcare worker keeps children in the playroom when their mothers are in class. The shelter has 20 beds in six rooms; each family has a bedroom with members' names on the door. "Families" are primarily young mothers with one or two children and pregnant teens; however, the shelter will take two-parent families. On occasions when there are more than six families in residence, pregnant guests with no children will share a room. Last year, the Cross Street Shelter was able to serve about 25 of the 300 families that sought its services.

Families generally stay at Cross Street an average of three months, but the freezing of 707 housing vouchers and a slow-down in the availability of Section 8 vouchers has been lengthening their stay. At the time of the visit, no shelter guests had gotten housing a voucher for over six weeks, although two families had been certified as eligible. At the same time, new DPW funding and referral policies could push families to move out of the shelter after 90 days.

Cross Street staff includes a Shelter Manager, a Housing Advocate and a Family Life Advocate. In addition to assisting with housing search, they help guests access benefits and services they need. These include medical and mental health services, welfare, child and family advocacy other benefits. The Family Life Advocate makes referrals to outside agencies and helps guests get to these appointments. None of these services is mandatory. The Family Life Advocate also organizes guest speakers and workshops on topics like nutrition, budgeting, savings, parenting, and interpersonal communication. Staff work to develop guests' self-confidence as well as their skills. They believe that helping mothers feel good about themselves and their kids is one of the shelter's most important missions. Cross Street Staff do not encourage guests to pursue job training or jobs, which in the staff's view would divert them from their primary responsibility to care for their young children.

The shelter is run along fairly strict lines: guests are expected to be up early, to keep watch over their children at all times, to help with cooking and other chores and to obey house rules. Concerns and disagreements are aired at Monday morning house meetings. At that time, they also have input into decisions on food, chores and other activities.

### • The Somerville Homeless Coalition's Role in H.E.L.P.

The Coalition entered into this initiative for several reasons: frontline shelter staff had identified a range of different educational needs among guests; and homeless advocates believed that education could be part of a longer-term strategy for empowering homeless people. Cross St. staff knew that few of their teen mothers had completed high school. Some were ready to pursue GEDs, while others couldn't even read to their children. They were particularly interested in establishing an on-site program so guests wouldn't have to deal with childcare or transportation. Many guests even find it difficult to go out for appointments.

Coalition staff at all levels have great enthusiasm for H.E.L.P. and how well it has served their guests. They also express affection and respect for the SCALE staff. Shelter Managers are in close touch with the SCALE co-coordinators; they work together to inform guests about H.E.L.P. and to connect them with program options responding to their individual needs. Managers are kept informed about and involved in decisions concerning individual guests. They come together monthly with the Coalition Director and SCALE staff to discuss program issues. Staff at both shelters offer guests encouragement and assistance with homework, if they want it. They also work on follow-up for guests who leave the shelter.

### • Local Context and Climate

#### The Need

Many poor people live in Somerville. Some of them are long-time residents, while others are newly arrived from Portugal, Cape Verde, Haiti and elsewhere. Low wages, high rents and competition for housing from students at nearby universities have conspired to make it hard for them to survive here. The Red Line extension has made family neighborhoods targets for gentrification, further reducing available affordable housing. In January 1988, the Somerville Office of Human Services documented 208 Somerville residents without permanent housing. Agencies serving the homeless dispute this figure; based on their annual service requests, they estimate that the real adult homeless population in Somerville is currently at least twice that number, or approximately 450. Every shelter in the City reported having to turn away 6-10 times as many people every year as it can serve. Many Somerville residents end up seeking services in Boston, where the capacity to serve them is greater. Finally, the estimate of 450 Somerville homeless does not include the "hidden homeless" who live in temporary, overcrowded conditions with friends or relatives. They are very hard to identify.

The majority of homeless adults in Somerville are single female heads of households with small children and little formal education. Most of them are on AFDC, and many have been living in welfare hotels and motels on the outskirts of the City, with no cooking facilities and no transportation. The City of Somerville's Shelter Manager observed that: "The majority of shelter clients are young women with children under the age of four; they have not had the chance to get a GED. Since they will be cast in the role of the "breadwinner" of the family, the more education and training they get, the better armed they are to offer their children a better life style. They will also demonstrate a better role model and the language skills and training they have secured can filter down to enrich their children." A youth shelter also identified education as one of their clients' priority needs; among the 16-21 year runaway and "thrown away" kids it serves, fewer than half attend school regularly.

### The Response

Somerville is a community where the homeless population is growing; but it is also a place where concern for homeless needs and coordinated action on behalf of the homeless are growing as well. The political climate here is more open, and agencies serving poor and disadvantaged people have a history of cooperating with each other and with the City. There are few "turf" wars. In May 1988, the Mayor established an Advisory Committee on Homelessness to bring together a very comprehensive group of shelter providers, social service and housing agencies, community groups, advocates and homeless individuals. This coalition works to involve the City in initiating collaborative efforts to reduce and prevent homelessness, and to support existing service providers. It also allows provider agencies to connect on a personal basis and to build trust through working together. The Advisory Committee is organized and staffed by the City Office of Human Services. Its mission includes:

- Updating and publicizing existing services to the homeless or those about to become homeless;
- Initiating a campaign to lobby to prevent homelessness;
- Participating in the development of permanent and transitional housing;
- Collaborating to obtain Federal grant funds to combat homelessness;
- Addressing the health and educational needs of children;
- Improving policies and programs to serve the homeless; and
- Serving as an information network among providers and service agencies.

## Program Vision and Goals

- Vision

H.E.L.P. works with individuals who are both homeless and underserved by current ABE delivery system; beyond this, they bring a wide range of needs and interests. The program seeks to develop "a way use education not only as a ticket to a better job but also as a means of enriching and empowering individuals' lives." To serve those learners well, SCALE believes that it must open up the existing delivery system, making it more accessible and responsive. But H.E.L.P. intends to go further, developing whatever new services and systems are needed to fill in the cracks in learners' self-esteem and their support networks, as well as in their skill base. H.E.L.P. is not only concerned with helping homeless people to learn "the 3 Rs;" it is trying also to identify the "other Rs"– the other experiences and learnings that will help these individuals gain control over their lives and begin to move in directions they choose.

SCALE's vision for H.E.L.P. reflects the agency's overall approach to education. H.E.L.P.'S vision has also been shaped and refined by individual SCALE staff members who are deeply committed to understanding what "education" and "empowerment" mean in the lives of the people they work with, and to developing effective way of reaching every person in the two shelters where H.E.L.P. operates. The SCALE Co-Coordinators and the teacher/counselor have approached this effort as a very open-ended process of gaining understanding and responding in ways that operationalize that new understanding.

The H.E.L.P. proposal, which set the framework for this program, reflected this broad vision. It offered a creative and comprehensive, yet flexible, mix of services. It put the whole range of SCALE's experience, facilities and expertise in the service of homeless learners; at the same time, it assumed that these would have to be adapted and reconfigured to respond to learners' specific needs. ABE, ESL and GED instruction would be offered through whatever form and methodology proved most appropriate: individualized, group and/or peer instruction. In addition, the H.E.L.P. proposal identifies some dimensions for research and comparison among instructional formats, and builds in a formative evaluation process for assessing them.

The initiative has built in a creative menu of service options, including: on-site shelter classes; mainstreaming students in SCALE classes and training programs; individualized work in the Adult Diploma Program; ongoing counseling and advocacy around a variety of concerns; tutoring and drop-in computer training; and referrals for training, continued education and jobs. It anticipates that SCALE's usual curriculum will need to be adapted to address budgeting, welfare, housing and whatever other "real life" situations homeless students confront. The shelter-based instructor was identified from the outset with a broad and responsive role, as a "teacher/ counselor." Part of her job is to develop materials specific to needs of homeless learners, drawn primarily from their life experiences and the problems they confront.

In this initiative, SCALE's has done "whatever it takes" to make it work. Staff have gone far beyond the agency's formal commitment to make its professional staff, facilities and expertise available to homeless learners referred through this program. While the grant provides funding for 5% administrative time, each of the two staff people who coordinate this program have contributed approximately one full day each week. The grant provides for four H.E.L.P. students to be enrolled in SCALE class slots, no limits have been set on the number of homeless learners who can enroll there, or who can use its other services. SCALE staff have helped homeless learners with resumes, finding jobs, learning computers, even with getting a garden started. They visit and go to dinner at the shelter. In general, coordinators and teachers have also spent a great deal of time listening and offering support "because guests feel so bad about themselves." As one staff member put it, "It's not exactly what we're supposed to do, but it's what they need. So we do it. We wouldn't not do it because someone doesn't fall into a certain category. We tell them all to come-- we're ready to respond in any way we can."

- Program Goals

### Access

H.E.L.P's most basic-- and at the same time most ambitious-- goal is to meet and talk with every single person in the two shelters the initiative serves. Staff emphasize that they don't want even one guest to be excluded from the opportunity to choose education. The program is entirely voluntary, and staff expect that it will take a while to develop a rapport that might make guests feel comfortable enrolling in the program.

Once guests express interest, H.E.L.P. staff will do whatever necessary to offer accessible education and educational counseling services that fit individual needs. The initiative should provide opportunities for guests to enhance their education, to continue an interrupted education, or to improve skills. Shelter and educational staff were clear from the outset that H.E.L.P. should not be confined by traditional adult education skill and credential levels. It is just as important to them to offer refresher courses and referrals to training for middle age adults, as it is to offer GED preparation for the larger population of younger adults. At a programmatic level, H.E.L.P. seeks to make education an extension of shelter services. It provides on-site services as needed.

### Goal-Setting and Achievement

Once guests are involved with the educational program, H.E.L.P. assists them in defining their goals and in setting timelines for achieving these goals. These include practical goals like getting jobs, getting housing and learning about child development, as well as academic goals such as gaining reading, writing, math and English skills or attaining a GED.

### Self-Esteem and Accomplishment

Both shelter and educational partners agree that the most important goal for this initiative is to develop guests' sense of accomplishment and self-worth. As the Coalition Director stated, this is especially critical "because in most other aspects of their lives they feel defeated and humiliated." The experience of finding themselves capable, of making visible progress or of finishing an unfinished high school education can build confidence and pride. Besides the confidence that achievement brings, H.E.L.P. staff also attempt to build a concern for empowerment into every contact they have with homeless learners: outreach, counseling, classes, follow-up. They are working to develop the "other Rs:" relationships and learning experiences that will help empower homeless individuals feel good about themselves and move forward. Classes can also connect guests with people and resources outside the shelter that will continue to be available in the future.

Staff at Cross Street shelter emphasize that they are not "pushing people to get job skills." In their view, this is unrealistic and counterproductive for mothers small children. Not all SCALE staff share this view.

## Distinguishing Characteristics

- SCALE took an inclusive approach to involving the Somerville administration and other community agencies in developing the H.E.L.P. initiative. It drew on expertise and support from the Mayor's Office of Human Services and the Advisory Committee on Homelessness.

- As an agency, SCALE offers a wide range of educational services so that "no matter what you need, there's a pretty good chance someone at SCALE can help." Program are structured and administered so that new initiatives like H.E.L.P. can easily tap into professional expertise either to enroll students or to create off-site classes. SCALE also has a great deal of credibility in the community.

- SCALE has extensive experience working with disadvantaged adults, many of whom confront some of the same problems as homeless learners. Yet, SCALE came into this initiative acknowledging the specificity of homeless adults' learning needs, and the fact that, throughout the pilot program, the agency would have to keep assessing its service delivery strategies against what it was learning. SCALE brought to this initiative open questions about adult education for the homeless, a commitment to exploring those questions, and a firm belief in assessing its strategies and being accountable for their outcomes.

- H.E.L.P. is committed to reaching out and responding to every guest in the two shelters it serves. Ten of 13 shelter guests are currently active in this program. The program has worked with a wide range of guests, from a mentally retarded young adult to several individuals who had college degrees. It does not exclude based on skill or credential levels. Staff are willing to spend time developing trusting relationships with guests who may be reluctant to get involved in learning.

- SCALE staff working on this initiative have a clear philosophy of how adult education can be empowering. The homeless education initiative is grounded in this philosophy. In their view, although their shelter stay is a difficult period for guests, it gives them time to look at their lives, their goals for themselves, and their options for working towards those goals. The initiative defines the instructor's roles as "teacher/counselor." Teacher/counselors can empower guests by helping them to examine their situation, identify their choices and options, and see through the barriers to moving ahead. These are the "other Rs," which are just as important for H.E.L.P. as the 3 R's. The teacher/counselor at the Cross St. shelter described her role, which grows out of a spiritual motivation as "answering that of God in everyone." She listens, finds and acknowledge that potential, and works to pull it out so the learner can appreciate it in herself.

- H.E.L.P. works to establish equal and trusting relationships between teacher and learners and among learners. Peer support is seen as critical; teachers try to show participants that they have a great deal to offer each other-- at least as much as the "professionals" do. The program draws out learners' knowledge and skills: for example, one Chapel St. guest who is enrolled in the program has been using his computer skills to volunteer one day a week at the SCALE Computer Center.

- Curriculum openly addresses life, identity and relationship issues that are important to learners. As the teacher/counselor describes:

> "I create situations where we can study relevant things. I gave an ABE student a Basic Health Book with drawings of women's reproductive organs and watched how she interacted with the book. Another student is working on reading comprehension with the Well Baby Book. We talk a lot about ourselves in class, woman to woman, as equals. We talk about child raising, anger, violence, how to tell a "good" man. That's what we're here for– to figure out how we're going to be women, to take care of ourselves, our bodies, our planet.
>
> "We also talk about the different races we are, and how this has affected us individually and as a group– how we get along. Having a refugee in the class has helped the rest of us see government in a new light, why it's important. We help each other figure out the different systems we have to deal with: immigration, housing, welfare, DSS."

- H.E.L.P. offers a creative, comprehensive and flexible mix of service options. It puts the whole range of SCALE's experience, facilities and expertise in the service of homeless learners. Options include: on-site shelter classes; mainstreaming students in SCALE classes and training programs; individualized work in the Adult Diploma Program; ongoing counseling and advocacy around a variety of concerns; tutoring and drop-in computer training; and referrals for training, continued education and jobs.

- The initiative has identified a research agenda for comparing the effectiveness of various programmatic options, including: shelter and SCALE sites; curriculum; instructional format; and support services. It builds in a process for evaluating these issues at the halfway point.

## Program Strengths

- Inclusiveness and Responsiveness: H.E.L.P is committed to serving every guest at the Chapel St. and Cross St. shelters, regardless of their skill or credential level. Staff offer ongoing encouragement and support to make education truly accessible to people who have been disappointed by life, by school, and by various efforts to help them. Staff are always attempting to surface and eliminate their own stereotypes of the homeless: their initial assumption that homeless learners would generally have low-level reading and writing skills; the received wisdom that guests would be consumed with finding housing and not interested in anything else; the expectation that younger guests would be more interested in education than older ones.

- Diversity of Options: As an agency, SCALE offers a wide range of effective educational programs and services. It has put all of these at the service of the homeless education program. H.E.L.P. is not wedded to any one service delivery model. It includes an on-site class as well as mainstreaming; group and individualized instruction; academic skills and life skills. Participants who don't want to enter classes or training programs can get assistance with resumes and job placement. The program is committed to developing options to respond to each learner's needs and interest, and to assessing the outcome of its different service delivery strategies.

- Broad Concept of Adult Education and Curriculum: The program's creation of a "teacher/counselor" role demonstrates its broad and flexible understanding of what adult education can offer homeless learners. Learning activities focus on process and relationships as well as content. Curriculum addresses "real life" issues important to learners and teachers, as well as reading, writing, math and English skills.

- Focus on Self-Esteem, Goal-Setting and Empowerment: Shelter and education partners agree that the most important concern for this initiative is building learners' self-esteem and confidence. They agree that the learning process should be empowering in itself. It should work from learners' goals, beginning by helping learners' believe in the possibility of setting and achieving goals.

- High Enrollment and Retention: In its first four months, H.E.L.P. has succeeded in enrolling 10 of 13 guests at the two shelters the initiative serves. In that period, only one person left the program. One learner at the family shelter continued with the class there even after she moved out of the shelter.

- Partnership: A strong and mutually supportive partnership has developed between SCALE and the Somerville Homeless Coalition. Staff from the two agencies are in frequent contact about individual learners' as well as programmatic decisions. All concerned are enthusiastic about the initiative and praise the staff's efforts. The lead agency is very aware that shelter staff are not compensated for their recruitment and support work, and coordinators try to avoid burdening shelter staff with paperwork or administration.

- Agency and Staff Commitment: SCALE undertook the homeless education initiative with a clear understanding of its agency goals for directly providing services to the homeless. SCALE guarantees slots for homeless learners, even though ongoing SCALE programs have long waiting lists. Its co-coordinators and teacher are deeply committed to "making this work;" they have extended themselves well beyond what the job would have required. Yet, all of them see it as a personally valuable experience. As one coordinator put it: "This has been a really humanizing experience for us. We've spent a lot of time at the shelter, but we've gotten a lot back from the guests."

- Community Climate: As a community, Somerville is making efforts to address homelessness. The City administration and service providers have entered into an open dialogue and collaboration. The H.E.L.P. initiative is support by these efforts, rather than being undermined by them, as in so many other communities.

- Perspective on Ending Homelessness: H.E.L.P. partners and staff have a very clear understanding of where there effort fits into to the broader cause of ending homelessness. They have a very politicized view of "what it would take" and see their effort as a necessary kind of triage. In the words of one administrator:

  > "We've done everything we can to help, but root causes would have to change to make a real difference. We'd need to build housing, lower rents. I'd love to put everything else on hold and get to who we need to, get 500 units of affordable housing built. It's thinkable and doable in Somerville."

  Staff are considering how this initiative could begin educating the broader community about the homeless-- who they are, how they got to the shelter, how they see the world.

## Concerns and Tensions

- Limited Impact: As discussed above under strengths, H.E.L.P. staff are very aware of this effort's limited capacity to affect real and lasting change for more than a select few homeless individuals. In addition, they are aware that the homeless guests they work with at the Chapel St. and Cross St. shelters are the "creme de la creme" of the homeless. Anyone with substance abuse problems or severe emotional problems has been screened out. It's ironic: H.E.L.P. has developed a very inclusive approach to reaching out to homeless learners in the two shelters they serve; yet, these shelters use rather exclusive criteria for determining who gets into their facilities.

- Scope: This initiative very successfully offers individualized services, with an emphasis on personal contact; it is telling that co-coordinators know every shelter guest. This responsive, human approach has created a well-grounded and successful program. Yet, there is inevitably a tension between offering such intensive services and expanding to reach a broader segment of the homeless population.

- Staff Time: Establishing this program has taken a lot of staff time, particularly at the Chapel St. site where co-coordinators are responsible for matching each guest with appropriate services and for ongoing support. At Cross St., the teacher/counselor can monitor progress and serve as an advocate for learners, as well as providing instruction. Together, Co-Coordinators devote a total of one and a half to two full days each week to this initiative. The grant funds only 5% or 1/4 day. The time requirements are aggravated by the fact that co-coordinators do not have office computers, and have not been able to develop a computerized database or tracking system.

- Scheduling: The Cross Street shelter class meets only twice a week, for two and a half hours each time. It isn't clear why this special class cannot meet more often or offer more contact hours.

- Tension Between Shelter Discipline and Education's Focus on Empowerment: There is some tension evident in establishing a learning climate focused on empowerment and gaining control over one's life within an overall shelter environment that requires guests to live out their lives according to strict rules. It is also difficult to operate a "voluntary" program on-site at the shelter; on days when guests choose to stay out of class, staff try to help them "follow through on their commitments."

- Tension Surrounding Jobs and Job Training: Cross Street shelter staff feel strongly that their guests, who are mothers of young children, should not pursue jobs or job training that would take time away from their children. SCALE staff feel that they need to get the mothers thinking about their own futures, how they will support themselves and their children. They do not push women towards taking jobs immediately, but they believe that women must understand and consider this part of their future.

## II. Program Design and Implementation

### Education Services

- Schedule of Learning Activities

H.E.L.P. operates a class on-site at the Cross Street shelter Mondays and Wednesdays 10:00 a.m. - 12:30 a.m. This class began in February and operates year-round except for the month of July. The shelter site was chosen to meet the needs of Cross Street guests. Guests can leave their children with the childcare worker upstairs and can visit them at break. There is no need to get dressed up or worry about transportation.

Guests from the Chapel St. shelter, who do not require childcare, will participate in classes at SCALE, which is located several blocks from the shelter. SCALE has a range of classes convenient for employed as well as unemployed shelter guests. Classes are available for instruction in ABE, GED, ESL and word processing. Vocational counseling, referrals for work and training, and a computer drop-in center are also available there. Guests can also be enrolled in a self-paced Adult Diploma Program.

Morning classes generally meet three mornings per week for two and a half hours; evening classes meet two evenings per week for two and a half hours. Regular SCALE classes operate only during the school year; they close for the summer on June 12. Guests who wish to continue through the summer can be transferred to the Cross St. class or matched with tutors.

Total instructional hours in the first quarter were 349. Other contact hours totalled 135.

- Eligibility, Recruitment and Intake

**Eligibility**

The H.E.L.P. initiative is available to all guests at both shelters. Staff believe that all guests who desire services through HELP are entitled to them; they are committed to serving any guest who requests educational and/or counseling service regardless of her academic skills or credentials. Offering services to middle age homeless adults with degrees who want refresher courses or help with job placement is considered just as important as GED preparation for young adults. The program is currently providing services for a mentally retarded student. Both sites are accessible to physically challenged participants. ESL services are available for linguistic minorities.

Although the program has no eligibility criteria, the two Homeless Coalition shelters have strict criteria. They do not take substance abusers or people with severe mental challenges. Most guests at both shelters are homeless for the first time.

**Recruitment**

H.E.L.P. has furnished each shelter with information on the SCALE program in general and this initiative in particular. Co-Coordinators come to the shelters once or twice each month to talk about the program and to get to spend time with guests. Information about the program also spreads among guests by word of mouth. As guests enter each shelter, the Shelter Manager will discuss with them the possibility of their participation in H.E.L.P. Managers ask guests about their educational history and concerns, and describe the whole range of educational services guests can access through H.E.L.P.

With a guest's consent, the Manager will forward her or his name to the one of the co-coordinators, who will make an appointment to meet with the guest at the shelter. One coordinator described her role in this encounter as much broader than recruitment: "I'm someone from outside the shelter who has nothing to do with their being in the shelter. I'm also a contact outside of the shelter-- for later." Shelter staff report that the coordinators relate comfortably to guests and that they are very good at motivating guests.

If a guest needs time to think about enrollment, H.E.L.P. staff will "check back" with him or her. Staff report that "sometimes it takes a few calls or visits to develop a good rapport, but it works. Only a few guests have chosen not to participate."

H.E.L.P. does informational outreach to other shelters through the Advisory Committee, but it does not accept referrals from them.

**Intake**

The first level of "intake" is the early contact Coordinators have with most guests soon after they arrive at the shelter. In this early contact, staff learn about guests' educational history and background. They also try to set up a relaxed rapport, so that guests will feel comfortable talking about their goals.

When guests choose to enroll, they go through a more formal intake which includes testing and goal-setting. The Coordinator whose background is in counseling does the pre-testing. A variety of intake tests are used including the following:

> For ABE/GED: Slossen; modified Botel; READ Informal Reading Inventory; writing sample; Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test; Nelson Reading Skills Test; and SCALE Math Diagnostic.
>
> For ESL: The John test, the See Test and other assessment devices appropriate to the student's educational background and English proficiency.

Schedules for different service options are also discussed. The Coordinator will test results to the teacher/counselor for Cross Street guests and to the Program Administrator in ABE, GED or ESL for guests who wish to be enrolled in classes. With the coordinator and program administrator (or teacher/counselor), each student will establish short-term and long-term academic and personal goals at the outset of her program.

- Enrollment and Retention

**Enrollment**

H.E.L.P. has made significant progress toward fulfilling its goal of serving 25 learners for the year. Even with a very small pool of guests, the program has exceeded its expectation of serving four students at a time from Chapel St. and three at one time from Cross St. Ten of 13 residents in the two shelter enrolled in the program this 1st quarter-- 7 from Chapel St. and 3 from Cross St. None of the shelter guests enrolled in this program were once part of ABE system.

At Chapel Street, all guests but one are enrolled in some program activity. At Cross St., about half are enrolled. The Shelter Manager explained lower interest there as a factor of students' self-esteem: "Some aren't ready because they can't think about doing something for themselves. Until they are, we'll continue to make it available."

The program enrolls primarily women, since all the guests currently at Cross St are women. It enrolls white, Black and Hispanic guests, although precise statistics weren't available. Guests of all ages and skill levels are enrolled. No low-level ESL clients are yet enrolled. While this will pose no problem for Chapel St. guests, who are enrolled in SCALE classes, it might be hard to integrate a non-English speaker into the Cross St. class.

**Retention**

Nine of 10 students who participated during the program's first quarter were still enrolled as of 3/31. The one who left did so after completing 12 hours. One woman who moved out of the Cross St. shelter continued classes there. Ongoing support and encouragement from program staff increase the probability that problems affecting retention will be identified and addressed early. At Cross Street, the teacher acknowledges that there are tensions around attendance and conflicting demands on guests. On occasions when a guest claim that shelter staff have pressured them to attend despite the fact that they don't want to come, she discusses it with them. Students who attend classes at SCALE are expected to comply with the student absence call-in policy. They are expected to call SCALE if they are going to be absent.

- Learning Activities, Curriculum and Environment

**Learning Activities**

As discussed above, SCALE offers homeless learners a wide range of learning options, including a special on-site shelter class; mainstreaming students in SCALE classes and training programs; individualized work in the Adult Diploma Program; ongoing counseling and advocacy around a variety of concerns; tutoring and drop-in computer training; and referrals for training, continued education and jobs. Each of these options is tailored to meet learners' individual needs, even as it engages them in a group learning process where peers learn from each other as much as they do from the teacher. The program emphasizes peer support and learning as a critical element in an empowering educational process.

**Curriculum On-Site at Cross St. Shelter**

Curriculum in all aspects of the program integrated information and skills addressing life problems guests are facing. This is heavily emphasized in the on-site shelter class, as described above under "Distinguishing Characteristics." The teacher/counselor there draws on materials about women's health, childcare, dealing with government agencies and other topics of interest to learners. She is developing learning materials and approaches to address guests' life experience and concerns; for example, she finds that photojournalism books are very effective for provoking reflection, discussion and writing. The teacher/counselor also solicits learner input on learning activities and materials. One multi-lingual woman is working to improve her English, as part of a strategy to get back her child; she has gotten the class to work more on vocabulary.

The teacher/counselor has a lot of experience in working on writing with groups of women, and believes strongly in it. Guests are encouraged to use journal writing as a safe place to "let down their hair." Learners also do creative writing and essays. One woman had just finished her first writing, on how to keep herself and her kids free from drugs. Another woman's poem on the connections between preventing war and preserving the planet was posted on the wall. The teacher/counselor would like to publish some of these writings, if the women want to. SCALE has access to a wonderful printing facility.

Guests who are very focused on getting their GED work from the GED workbook, supplemented by magazines, newspapers and other materials. The test is presented as one set of skills and knowledge, but certainly not the only useful one or any kind of ultimate goal. The teacher/counselor takes a "strategic" approach to the test: she encouraged students to respect their own knowledge-- not to feel they had to do every question or to go over skills and information they already know. She encouraged them to challenge themselves by skipping easy parts and focusing on harder questions. The teacher/counselor seemed very familiar with the test, and was able to focus in on "predictor questions" that could tell her and the student what areas they did and didn't know, without having to go through a whole predictor test.

### Curriculum at SCALE

Shelter students who enter SCALE classes will utilize the agency's standard curricula, with some modifications. The principles and approaches underlying SCALE curricula will also shape any off-site classes and individualized instruction this initiative offers. In each program area, SCALE has developed developmental frameworks and curriculum guidelines to structure classes. For example, ABE is divided into four levels that help students develop a progression of 10 specific "credentials." This helps teachers to identify a "beginning, middle and end" for students, building in milestones, which is particularly important for those with low skills levels, who need years of work. It also gives teachers and administrators a basis for evaluating their own strategies and efforts.

SCALE teachers vary their curriculum and instructional methodologies to meet the needs of students enrolled. While teachers share a commitment to responding to learner needs, using education for empowerment and developing peer learning, a range of pedagogical approaches and materials are used to accomplish these goals. A very brief sketch of the three major curriculum areas is offered below.

ABE: Classroom instruction using materials from Educator's publishing Service, Scott Foresman's Adult Reading Series, the Let's Read series and other materials with an emphasis in the following skill areas: phonetic analysis, structural analysis, reading comprehension, writing readiness, spelling basic mathematics, prevocational skills.

- ABE I: Offers a highly structured, linguistic approach to reading, writing and spelling. Writing and spelling are immediately introduced into the curriculum.
- ABE II: Comprehension skills are emphasized
- ABE III: Continues to develop comprehension skills via curriculum emphasizing literature and social studies.

The desired students to teacher ratio in ABE is 6:1.

GED and ABE/GED Program: Classroom instruction using Cambridge GED series, Scott Foresman's GED materials and other materials that address following subject areas: writing skills (especially for producing the required 300-word essay); Social Studies; Science; Reading Skills; Math. Reasoning skills are emphasized. Information about U.S. history and current events supplements standard materials. Desired student/teacher ratio is 6:1.

ESL: Offers four levels of instruction primarily using the New Horizons series of books. The ESL program will consist of content areas: conversation, grammar, pronunciation, reading, writing and prevocational skills. English conversation immersion is emphasized. Desired student: teacher ratio is 15:1.

### Counseling and Other Non-Classroom Learning Activities

Guests have the option of enrolling in and Adult Diploma Program, where they can get high school credits for knowledge and life experiences. The Co-Coordinator whose specialty is guidance offers guests academic counseling, vocational counseling and information on college financial aid options. She also helps with pre-employment skills like interviews and resumes, as well as job placement and referrals.

### Homelessness in the Curriculum

H.E.L.P. staff find that the extent to which homelessness and related issues can be directly addressed in learning activities depends a lot on who the students are. Some interested in talking about the experience, while others are not. The learning environment makes a great deal of difference in facilitating this kind of discussion: trust makes it much easier to talk about hard issues like these. At the shelter class, the teacher/counselor most class activities are "woven around" the central theme of empowering guests to confront and understand their lives, including the experience of becoming homeless.

### Linkage to Jobs and Job Training

This is one curriculum area where H.E.L.P. partners do not agree. Staff at Cross St. shelter feel strongly that the young mothers they serve should focus on child raising and that jobs and job training should be considered only as a future option. SCALE staff respect this view, but do not entirely agree. They do not see education as necessarily focusing on jobs; but they also believe that while students are in classes, they should at least be talking and thinking about work. Otherwise, they will end up on welfare or in shelters all their lives. Teachers have had prior experience working with welfare mothers in SCALE's housing project program; they have seen some women succeed at becoming economically self-sufficient.

Teachers hope that once homeless learners get housing, they will be able to do "something that makes them feel good– whatever that may be." One teacher speculated that: "It's important that guests learn to think about and plan for the future, even as they focus now on their kids and other responsibilities. Learning to hold these two thoughts in mind at once– who you are and who you want to become-- is a big part of getting empowered."

### Learning Environment at Cross Street

The Cross Street class meets in a bible study classroom on the ground floor of the church where the Shelter is located. It is a small room, nearly filled by a long table with chairs. A chalkboard is mounted on one wall, and on the day of the visit a "baby pool" was up there-- listing the dates when various guests and staff thought one learner's baby would be born. Learner writings, posters and a peace calendar were also up. Books and magazines were stacked in several spots; most of the books were novels and non-fiction works, with only a few workbooks and texts.

There was no cabinet or file; the teacher would like to get a locked file cabinets where student journals and other materials can be safely kept.

Four young women worked around the table, each on her own activity. Several worked in GED prep books; one was writing an essay; one worked in the Well Baby Book. The teacher/counselor moved between to answer questions and offer encouragement. There was some conversation among learners, and a few times it engaged all or most of the students. At break, some learners went upstairs to visit with their children.

The teacher/counselor in this class has a very clear idea of the kind of learning environment she is trying to create. She is working to build trust, honesty and equality:

> "I believe in seizing the moment, learning from whatever comes up. We're all learning from each other about empowerment, the various systems we're in, race, being Women. Every person in the class learns something from what every other person brings: for example, having an African woman in the class has helped one other student reflect on her own African background (she's Cape Verdean, but always called herself Portuguese). It's helped all of us engage the issue of our histories and experiences with people of different races.
>
> "The student who is a refugee is very interested in how our Government works-- in fact, she needs to know about immigration, how decisions get made. Her husband is some kind of hostage in her country. This has made all of us stop and think about why we need to care about government. I've also tried to help her speak up, try every channel, like writing to Senator Kennedy."

The teacher/counselor emphasizes that she "is the model and the message." She will do anything she can to be a "real person:" use her first name, use slang, talk "woman talk." It is very important for her that students know this is not like school-- that those kinds of rules and power relations don't apply. She is very enthusiastic about how well this class is going: "This is the happiest I've ever been teaching-- I can rely on my knowledge and instincts, not be constrained by mandates."

Shelter staff also feel good about this class because "it is easy going and fun, but the teacher knows how to set limits when necessary. They see the teacher's enthusiasm as a critical element, because "guests pick up on lack of enthusiasm. The challenge is to keep it interesting so guests will want to finish what they start."

### Learning Environment at SCALE

Teachers at SCALE manage to create a classroom environment where learner interact as a group and learn from each other, but where each individual still gets a lot of attention from the teacher. In one low-level ESL classroom, the teacher very skillfully engaged learners in name drills: with her, with each other, with the visitor. She managed to keep the attention of more than a dozen learners sitting around a horseshoe-shaped table. The teacher kept up a lively pace, enthusiastically commending right answers and gently correcting wrong ones.

Peer support is particularly emphasized at SCALE. Teachers try to create learning environments where peer support can develop, where learners have opportunities to learn from each other. The agency also emphasizes the importance of working with all students on greater racial and ethnic understanding.

The physical facility at SCALE offers different kinds and sizes of classrooms. Some, like the ESL class described above, are arranged so that learners work together at tables. Others have individual desks. All rooms are bright, with posters and photos on the walls.

The Shelter Manager at Chapel St. confirmed that learners get a lot of personal attention at SCALE, which makes them feel important. They are comfortable there, and don't feel intimidated. Before long, homeless learners begin to feel really connected to SCALE-- part of a small community outside the shelter.

Coordinators are happy to take shelter guests over for a first visit at SCALE, to introduce them to teachers and other students. Coordinators also try to put shelter learners in classes with teachers whose style is compatible with the learner's.

- Student Assessment

Intake testing is described under #2 above. After intake, SCALE emphasizes student self-assessment and teacher student discussions of progress, rather than formal testing (Students preparing the GED are the exception to this; they do take predictor tests in the different subject areas).

H.E.L.P. tries to keep counseling and testing separate from teaching; the teacher "is someone learners are working with to grow and explore. It's jarring to have testing be part of this." So one of the coordinators does all intake testing.

Coordinators or the teacher/counselor will meet as required with shelter managers to discuss the "fit" of an instructional program for a particular student.

- Teacher/Tutor Selection, Training and Support

SCALE and H.E.L.P. requires that teachers be certified and that they have a minimum of one year experience in adult education or training. For the teacher/counselor, they also require a concern about homelessness. The current teacher/counselor is one of SCALE's best-- she far exceeds these minimum requirements.

All SCALE teachers and administrators are unionized, which is very unusual for adult educators. The teacher/counselor is paid an hourly wage, including teaching and preparation time. No benefits are included.

For teachers who wish to become more familiar with homeless issues, the Mayor's Office of Human Services will offer training and consultation on homeless issues. They have a large collection of video and print materials on homelessness. Their staff is also very experienced on issues surrounding homelessness, such as DPW and housing authority procedures. Teachers may also take part in in-service training offered by SCALE and other agencies.

The teacher/counselor stated that she feels "very supported." She has good communication with the SCALE coordinators. Shelter staff are very positive, and are also "on the same wavelength."

- Learning Outcomes

One shelter staff summed up the outcomes of this program's first four months:

> "The program has met a lot of needs. At first, I thought the bottom line was to get GEDs. It wasn't until after a while that I realized there was so much more involved: self-esteem work, job counseling, tutoring. Guests are all in different programs. No two people are working on same things. Every one of them feels a sense of accomplishment, loves the personal attention. One very fearful woman has gone faithfully, and has gained confidence. I attribute this to the fact that coordinators set her up with a compatible teacher. This will probably help her get her children back (they were taken away by DSS). That's just one of many examples. . ."

A staff person at the other shelter said that the program has "gone far beyond our expectations. It's a whole new support system for guest."

## Program Organization

- Partnership

This partnership has started with a manageable scope. It works intensively with a small number of learners at two sites, which has allowed the partnership to evolve in an unpressured way and to see real results from its efforts. Coordinators feel that at the pilot stage and with the current level of resources, they can do a good job with two sites-- not more. They also feel it would be difficult to take referrals from other shelters without more staff and more time to develop relationships with those shelters such as the relationships they have with Cross St. and Chapel St. Partners were also familiar with each other's agencies before this initiative. Several Chapel St. guests had studied at SCALE over the years, and a few got GEDs. Both agencies sit on the Mayor's Advisory Committee on Homelessness.

There is good communication between partners at all levels. Coordinators see the Chapel St. Shelter Manager regularly, while the teacher/counselor sees Cross St. staff twice each week. Monthly meetings at SCALE bring together staff from both learning sites, along with the Coalition Director and both coordinators.

- Coordination/Management

**Division of Responsibilities: SCALE**

Coordination and management responsibilities for this initiative are shared by two SCALE staff members: the ABE program administrator and the GED guidance counselor. They have divided responsibilities roughly according to their strengths, although the original division of labor has shifted as the program has grown. The counselor is primarily responsible for outreach, intake, counseling, ongoing support and follow up. The ABE Program Administrator (PA) handles budget, paperwork, placement of learners within SCALE and liaison with SCALE teachers, with the Cross St. teacher/counselor and with the Department of Education. Because such a large number of guests were interested, the PA began doing some of the outreach and support work. She also enjoys this.

Both coordinators are flexible, and they are willing to back each other up. They both want to keep a sense of the "big picture"–to understand what's going on at both places. Neither has an office computer, and some coordinating time could be saved if there was a computerized student database. As a result, each coordinator works approximately one day a week on this program. The co-coordinators meet every Thursday, and keep a running list of issues in the meantime.

The current coordinators don't intend to keep doing the coordination for this program; once they have a sense of how it's working, they want to turn it over to someone else. The program will require more funding for an additional position.

**Shelter Roles**

The coordinators are very aware that shelters are not compensated for staff time devoted to this program; they try had to "make this a nice experience for shelter staff." They have avoided developing a lot of forms or paperwork for shelters and students to deal with, even though a paper trail would make their own jobs easier. They've kept it largely informal and face-to-face.

As numbers grow, however, the program is finding that more formalized procedures are necessary. After four months, the partners have just decided that an intake form would be useful, and SCALE is developing one. Coordinators anticipate that eventually an exit form, where students could indicate what they're interested in following up, would also be helpful.

Shelter managers inform guests about the program, and pass on information about guests to H.E.L.P. staff. They are also available to help with homework and to encourage learners. Shelter staff are kept informed about guests' progress and any problems that come up. Shelter staff at Cross St. also see it their role to help guests keep the commitment they've made: "We don't interfere with the teaching piece. We only encourage those who resist after they've made the commitment. If they decide definitely not to go, no one pushes."

- Support Services

Through the coordinators and teacher/counselor, H.E.L.P. builds in academic and vocational counseling, as well as ongoing support and encouragement for guests. This sends a clear message that education can and will respond to the whole person– not just academic and skill needs. More formal counseling is available through shelter referrals to the mental health system. Staff at both shelters can make other referrals as needed.

The Family Life Advocate at Cross Street organizes supplemental workshops on budgeting, savings, nutrition, parenting, health and mental health topics like interpersonal communication, self-esteem and dealing with abuse. She is seeking ways to organize arts and crafts, which guests have requested.

Childcare is available while Cross St. students are in class. Parents who continue with classes after leaving the shelter are also eligible to use this childcare. A skilled childcare worker was taking care of four children, age three months to four years, on the day of the site visit. She works with them on art, games, reading stories and other activities. Although they don't have time to be responsible for childcare for all classes, shelter staff can offer backup childcare, as needed. The only problem with childcare so far is finding a way to restrict it to children of parents who are in class. According to the Shelter Manager, some parents who aren't in class feel the babysitter should be here to watch all shelter children.

Guests do not need transportation to get to classes at either site (they are on-site at Cross St. and one block away at Chapel St.) Learners who want to continue with classes after they leave the shelter are eligible for transportation vouchers if they are on welfare. There is also a small amount of money in the H.E.L.P. budget to reimburse transport.

Tutoring is available to supplement classwork for guests who want it. SCALE doesn't generally use tutors extensively outside of class.

- Incentives and Barriers to Participation

### Incentives

This program offers an avenue for guests to work on almost any kind of educational or training interest they can identify. It also offers very personalized, supportive contact with staff. The approach to education is nothing like the rigid, punitive school experience many guests remember. Instead, it creates an open, relaxed learning environment where students learn from each other as well as from teachers, and where they can address pressing concerns in the classroom.

### Barriers

H.E.L.P. has remarkably few barriers to participation, and staff are very persistent about working to break down whatever barriers exist-- notable guests' low self-confidence, depression and fear. A few minor obstacles can be identified:

- Many classes close for the summer, interrupting guests' learning;
- A viable childcare option has not yet been developed for guests who prefer to continue classes at SCALE rather than at Cross St.; and
- Cross Street's emphasis on discipline and carrying through commitments can make this program seem like another mandated activity, another way to appease "the system."

Finally, while there are few barriers for shelter guests to participation, restricting eligibility to guests at these two small shelters poses an insurmountable obstacle to other homeless individuals who are interested in educational services.

- Transition and Follow-Up

### Transition

H.E.L.P. hasn't had to deal with transition very much, since only a few guests have left the two shelters in the first four months of program operation. SCALE has experience working to develop and implement transitional programs that place groups such as displaced workers, individuals who have been incarcerated and individuals who are leaving public housing in permanent community-based ABE programs. In the process, SCALE has established a broad network of ABE contacts that H.E.L.P. may access.

This program builds in planning for transition from the very beginning. At intake, students are asked to sign a letter releasing their name and address to the program when they move. Particularly at Chapel St., Co-coordinators pay careful attention to the transition into programs at SCALE. They offer support upfront and on an ongoing basis, to assure that the learner is making a positive connection and that she or he has an alternative channel if problems come up in class. They accompany HELP students to SCALE.

At Cross Street, learners who have left the shelter have the option to stay in the on-site class or to go into SCALE classes. It is often convenient for them to continue at Cross St., since childcare is available there and guests have developed a comfortable rapport with the teacher and other learners there. One woman has continued with the class after leaving the shelter. Transportation is potentially a problem, but the shelter is near a bus and most guests get housing in Somerville, Medford or Everett. Some former guests do not want to come back to the shelter even if they enjoyed the classes there; they resent the shelter's strict discipline and want to stay far away from it.

When guests are due to leave the shelter, teachers and coordinators talk with them about their plans to continue. They include a range of things that the program can help with besides classes: "let us know if there's anything we can do to help with school, career plans, daycare, getting into the community college." Shelter staff also bring up education plans in the exit interview they conduct with every guest.

**Follow-Up**

Because most guests find housing in Somerville or nearby communities, follow-up is not difficult. At Cross Street, the Housing Advocate does follow-up for six months after families leave the shelter, while the Family Life Advocate does follow-up for three months. Both are very willing to continue follow-up longer, and are available if someone calls.

The teacher/counselor at Cross St. is also willing to do follow-up with learners. In the H.E.L.P. proposal, SCALE outlined a follow-up plan that includes a questionnaire like the one they usually use. It would cover the following areas:

1. Reason for leaving SCALE/H.E.L.P.;
2. Plans for returning to SCALE/H.E.L.P.;
3. Impact of SCALE on current situation;
4. Future plans; and
5. Suggestions for improving SCALE/H.E.L.P.

The program has not yet had much occasion to use such a questionnaire. It has also been cautious about developing a lot of forms and paperwork, as discussed above under #2.

- Program Assessment

H.E.L.P. staff are asking a lot of questions about homeless education, and continually assess how well the program is meeting its goals and responding to guests' needs. Based on previous experience with programs serving disadvantaged people, SCALE has an idea of what some of the criteria for measuring program success will be:

- Percentage of total number of clients who enroll;
- Number of clients who attend for at least 12 hours;

- Percentage of clients who are successfully placed in a transition program upon leaving the shelter;
- Total number of clients who receive their GEDs;
- Number of 16-21 year old students who are referred to the local school department for clarification of their status under Chapter 766; and
- Comparison of success rates of clients who participate in instruction at the shelter location as opposed to those who attend instruction at the learning center.

But these criteria measure the "big picture," and the H.E.L.P. Coordinators and teacher/counselor are very concerned about looking at what "success" means on a daily basis in a program like this. They are asking: "What would it mean for a guest to feel 'empowered' by their participation in this program?"

Although H.E.L.P. is very responsive to learner concerns and teachers solicit suggestions on classroom activities, there is no formal channel for guests to have input into program planning or assessment.

- Expansion/Innovation of Services

H.E.L.P. is seeking additional funding to develop program coordination into a formal part-time position, so that the SCALE administrators can turn it over to someone else.

The program is considering whether it should try to offer classes on-site at Chapel St., in addition to the SCALE options. They are also seeking ways to make it possible from some Cross St. guests to transition into SCALE if they want to, particularly after they leave the shelter. Childcare is the major obstacle.

SCALE's director wants to expand outreach and begin to take referrals from a wide range of other shelters, including a youth shelter. He wants to develop a more comprehensive network of referrals, whereby shelterless as well as homeless adults could have access to the program. Coordinators believe that funding and staffing would have to be expanded to make this possible. They also emphasize the value of developing relationships with each shelters-- not just working together via referrals.

SCALE's Director also wants to develop the linkages between education and training, so that the program can take guests all the way through, if they're interested.

All H.E.L.P. staff are thinking about follow up. At the time of the visit they hadn't yet been confronted with many follow up problems, but they were concerned with developing a comprehensive system that kept people in the program.

## III. RECOMMENDATIONS

- Staffing Pattern: H.E.L.P. might consider what kind of staffing pattern would reduce demands on the two SCALE administrators who currently co-coordinate, while keeping them well informed about the program. Their expertise, perspective and commitment are a major factor in this initiative's success.

- Expanding Program Scope: With the Advisory Committee on Homelessness, SCALE and the Homeless Coalition should examine what level of staff and funding, and what channels for communication and coordination, would be needed for this initiative to reach out to an expanded range of homeless and shelterless Somerville residents. What would it take for H.E.L.P. to maintain its responsiveness and face-to-face contact for both education and administration?

- Program Scheduling: H.E.L.P. should consider the possibility of making learning activities available to family shelter residents more often than two mornings each week.

- Vision of Homeless Education: The State funding agency should consider ways to support documentation and dissemination of information on H.E.L.P's approach to adult education. The program's responsiveness and inclusiveness, its wide range of options, its "teacher/counselor" role, and its process orientation are particularly unique.

- Cross Street Learning Activities and Approach: The State funding agency should also consider supporting documentation of the approach to homeless education that is being developed here. The teacher/counselor's approach to building trust and dialogue and to drawing in experiences and issues from learners' experience are valuable and interesting.

- Educating the Public: H.E.L.P. staff should consider how they might follow through their concerns about public perceptions of the homeless. Can the program's experiences with homeless learners, or even program activities with learners, be used to educate the public?

**Evaluation Completed By:** Mary Jo Connelly

**Date of Site Visit:** May 30, 1990

# GREATER LAWRENCE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM FOR THE HOMELESS

## GREATER LAWRENCE YWCA, DAYBREAK SHELTER & LAWRENCE PUBLIC SCHOOLS ADULT LEARNING CENTER

# STATISTICAL PROFILE

*"Since I started this program I can see how many persons are out there waiting to be friends and how many things I still have to do in my life."*

Demographics: N = 5

All of the learners surveyed from the Greater Lawrence YWCA program were male. The majority (80%) were 21 years or older, and all were single. Over half of the learners surveyed indicated that English was their most frequently spoken language. The majority had lived in Massachusetts over 10 years. The majority reported that they had children but did not have them with them.

Forty percent of those surveyed indicated that they had lived in a shelter the past six months; 40% with family and friends and 20% had lived in their own apartment. Currently, 40% were living in their own apartment or rooming houses; 20% were living with friends; and 20% were living in the subway/streets/parks. Over half of those surveyed indicated that this was their first time in a shelter. The main reasons for leaving their last permanent home was job and family problems.

The majority of those surveyed indicated that part-time employment was their main source of income. Forty percent indicated that they were receiving public assistance-general relief, food stamps, and SSI. Eighty percent reported that they had worked in the past and 60% indicated that they were currently looking for work and would like assistance in looking.

Education

All of the learners surveyed reported that they had completed at least 8 grades of school. Forty percent had graduated high school or had some college. Over half indicated that they had not been in an adult education program previously, and 80% indicated that this was their first time in the program. All of the learners indicated that they found out about the program through a shelter counselor. The most frequent responses to why they enrolled were: better myself in general; was encouraged; to get a job; to read better; to speak better English; and to write better.

The majority of those interviewed indicated that the program was giving them what they expected. Some of the things that they expected were: learning to read; and write and speak better English. All of the respondents indicated that there was nothing about the program that they wanted to change.

All of the learners surveyed indicated that they felt they had changed as a result of the program. Learners suggested that they changed in the following ways: have control over future; can ask for help; have friends who understand me; manage agency relationships better; excited about learning and want to learn more; more self confidence; and read and write better.

All of the learners surveyed said that they liked having the classes as part of the shelter. Less than half felt it was hard to come to the program sometimes. All of the respondents reported that they would like to continue in classes after they leave the shelter and that support from teachers would help them continue. Those who were interviewed stated they would like to take ESL classes, job training, and vocational education classes. Sixty percent indicated that they wanted to go to college.

# PROGRAM PROFILE

## I. Program Summary

### Program History & Context

Three afternoons each week, visitors to the Greater Lawrence YWCA see lively activity behind the glass doors of its formal first-floor boardroom. At one end of the shiny mahogany meeting table a group of men and women read aloud, write in notebooks, discuss among themselves and interact with an instructor who moves between the table and a flipchart. Several Y staff and visitors have learned that this is a class studying English as a Second Language and have asked to join it. They have no way of knowing that most of this diverse group of students go home together-- to a shelter for recovering alcoholics and addicts. All the students in this class are homeless, and several of them are newly sober.

This is one of several activities organized by the Greater Lawrence YWCA Educational Program for the Homeless (EPH), which was awarded a McKinney Adult Education Grant in January 1990. EPH is the product of a 3-way partnership between the Lawrence YWCA, the Lawrence Public Schools Adult Learning Center, and the Daybreak Shelter. EPH also does outreach to and accepts referrals from other local shelters, and also works through the Greater Lawrence Coalition for the Homeless, a group that brings together all local shelter providers with representatives of various social service agencies, including the Welfare Department and Veterans' Outreach. At the time of the evaluation visit, the EPH program had been in operation less than three months. It had already enrolled 16 homeless learners, of whom 13 were still active.

The homeless, along with welfare recipients and racial minorities (Lawrence has one of the largest populations of Hispanic people in the state), are currently under siege in Lawrence. In these times of general social and fiscal tension throughout the state, in Lawrence there is a movement to "take Lawrence back for those who built it" -- the white middle-class -- which is supported in subtle and not-so-subtle ways by the city administration. This has created a "safe" climate for discrimination, according to some program staff. In this climate, plans to rehabilitate abandoned building as cooperative and transitional housing have been abandoned. Any locally-run training programs incorporate selection criteria that keep them beyond the reach of homeless individuals. Massachusetts Department of Public Welfare Temporary Emergency Shelter requirements compound the difficulties the homeless face in Lawrence: the homeless are often transferred between shelters in several cities (Lawrence, Lowell and Haverhill) within a 20-mile radius, keeping them transient and rootless.

The adult homeless population in Lawrence defies stereotyping; it is made up of "families and individuals with diverse needs, alike only in their need for housing." The EPH proposal describes them as:

- working parents who cannot afford today's high rent
- those displaced by gentrification or condemnation
- those lacking competitive job skills
- those with low educational achievement levels
- those lacking or low in English language fluency

- former mental health patients discharged without adequate support
- the physically or mentally handicapped
- those frustrated by lack of knowledge or services or experiencing difficulty accessing available services
- recovering substance abusers

The employed and the unemployed, the young and the old, English speakers and non-speakers-- in short, men, women and children of all races, ages and backgrounds-- are homeless in Lawrence. This is the context in which the Greater Lawrence YWCA initiated a partnership with the Lawrence Adult Learning Center and Daybreak Shelter to provide educational services to some homeless people in Lawrence.

## Program Vision: Philosophy, Goals, Focus

- The Lead Agency: The Lawrence YWCA

For the lead agency on this grant, the Lawrence YWCA, this program brings together two key pieces of its mission: working with the homeless and providing community education. The Y "has people from cradle to grave," offering child care, Girls' Club, Teen Power and Point After Club (for developmentally delayed youth), as well as swimming, basketball and other sports. The Y has also operated programs to train displaced homemakers and mature workers. Partners view the fact that much of the community comes to the Y as a great asset: the Y provides a neutral place for a homeless education program.

For nearly 100 years, the YWCA has provided low-cost housing for women. In 1988, it entered into an agreement with the Department of Welfare to renovate part of its building as transitional housing for homeless women and their children (including women released from Danvers State Hospital). Guests usually include one or more mothers with children. There is no limit on how long guests can stay at the Y, while they wait for permanent housing. The shelter has a living room, kitchen, bath and laundry, and five guest rooms. The YWCA tries "to maintain as much dignity as possible for women and children in crisis, and to promote health, safety, responsibility for self and respect for all residents." The Y shelter has few rules for guests, and when there is a conflict over some rules (e.g. smoking), the Residence Director is willing to be flexible and negotiate an agreeable solution.

At the time of the visit, no Y residents had yet enrolled in EPH classes, although several had used its counseling services. The YWCA's Director fully supported the Residence Director's initiatives in education with the homeless.

- Program Coordinator's Vision & Goals

The Lawrence Educational Program for the Homeless is the brainchild of Brenda McKinley, the YWCA Residence Director. She now also serves as EPH Counselor/Coordinator (1/3 time-- 14 hours/week). With the Homeless Coalition's support, Brenda brought these three agencies together to create a program offering supportive, affirming learning experiences to people whose educational gaps "add to their merry-go-round of hopelessness," or who were simply interested in learning. Brenda's more than 12 years of work with homeless individuals and housing advocacy has given her a very holistic vision of what "adult education with the homeless" can be. She is an active member of the Greater Lawrence Coalition for the Homeless, and sits on the Regional Employment Board. With a Master's degree in education and a specialization in rehabilitation, Brenda has taught pre-employment skills to displaced homemakers and has counseled people in crisis.

In providing educational services to homeless guests, Brenda tries to work "with the whole person." She offers counseling as needed, has sought out medical and vision care for participants, and has arranged supplies and staffing for program participants who need to use the YWCA pool and gym. Brenda arranged to have the ESL class in the Y's boardroom because "it provides a stable, accessible place, and also one that's pleasant for participants to come to."

This program is unusual in that it works with a "wet" shelter. Participants must be sober for 30 days to enter the program. The Coordinator believes that this must be a program for all people. It should not exclude those who are considered more difficult or less "acceptable:"

> "People in 'wet' shelters are 'throwaway' people. 'Wet' shelter people usually can't prove any kind of status. They are the least likely to be accepted into other education and training programs. Also, family shelters tend to be more 'acceptable' to education and training programs. Reunifying families is a cleaner goal than supporting someone who is trying to get off drugs or alcohol. 'Wet' shelter people are just as human as you or me-- they just haven't had the support we've had."

In the Coordinator's view, "all people need an element of hope;" and she is determined to develop a program where all people can find it-- even those who have "hit bottom." For them, the Education Program for the Homeless can be one small step forward, on the road to trying to improve their lives. "They might take 10 steps backward after-- but we've implanted something they can later use to move forward again, get back on the road." The program should be an "open-ended conversation" that meets learners where they are, not one that sets up a series of criteria they need to meet.

The Counselor/Coordinator's main goals for this program are:
(1) to provide a positive learning experience that will help homeless individuals overcome negative school experiences and re-connect with learning;
(2) to build participants' self-confidence;
(3) to respond to a wide range of participants' learning needs and interests; and
(4) to promote transition to the Adult Learning Center.

- Daybreak Shelter's Role & Goals

Brenda McKinley and Marilyn Bouchard, the Director of Daybreak Shelter, first met through the Homeless Coalition. Daybreak and the Y share a supportive, holistic approach to working with the homeless that some other Lawrence shelters do not embrace. Daybreak is a 24-hour shelter for individuals age 18 and older; it also serves as transitional housing for the Psychological Center's de-tox programs. It has been open since 1984, at its present site since 1986. Despite initial resistance, Daybreak has established credibility in the community. It has beds for 20 men and 10 women, and in winter finds a spot for anyone who needs one. The shelter is located in a modular house, and has a small sitting area, kitchen, two baths and several tiny offices, as well as rooms filled with many rows of cots.

As a "wet" shelter, Daybreak does not turn away individuals with substance abuse problems. It is not a treatment program and for some people cannot do more than offer shelter; yet, the shelter's mission is to reintegrate guests into the community. Daybreak staff try to provide a safe, supportive environment where housing, food, medication and other basic needs are met. They also go beyond basic needs to help individuals work towards recovery, helping guests to set and meet goals. Sobriety or getting clean is usually the first goal. Guests are encouraged to attend AA meetings (3 times/week on-site, daily off-site, with transportation available), to get counseling from the Psychological Center, or to enter residential treatment programs. Housing and employment are critical "next step" goals, and Daybreak seeks referrals for these. Guests who are working on recovery or "next step" goals, like education, can stay as long as they need to. 'Others can stay up to 90 days.

Daybreak staff hope that this program will allow guests more time and support to regroup-- to move back into education and on to other goals without too much pressure. The Director also hopes that this program will teach life management skills, as well as writing, spelling and grammar. She finds that even when guests already have a diploma or GED, they still need work on basic skills.

- Lawrence Adult Learning Center's Role & Goals

The ALC is a 17-year old institution funded by the School Department to provide individualized and group instruction to adults interested in developing ESL proficiency, basic education, pre-GED and GED preparation. It also operates a variety of grant and contract-funded programs for specific groups, including young drop-outs, welfare recipients, immigrants seeking citizenship and employees in Workplace Education programs. The ALC had some experience working with homeless individuals prior to this grant. In 1988, it collaborated with a local family shelter, Lazarus House, to develop a preliminary proposal for this grant (the shelter dropped out before submission). It has also participated in another McKinney-funded program for the education of homeless children. Jeanne O'Brian, Program Developer for the Lawrence Public Schools' Adult Learning Center (ALC), worked with Brenda McKinley and Marilyn Bouchard on the EPH proposal and meets with them on program administration. The ALC Intake Counselor is the "direct linkage" between the partners.

ALC's goals for this program are:
(1) to help homeless individuals build self-esteem and confidence ("80% of the job");
(2) to help learners gain a sense of direction and set goals;
(3) to upgrade learners' skills; and
(4) to let learners know about options and avenues open to them.

## Distinguishing Characteristics

- This program is open to a range of shelter guests, including guests from a "wet" shelter -- the "throwaway people" who are in early recovery from substance abuse.
- The EPH program approaches recovery and education as mutually reinforcing parts of a single process.
- Partners in this program have worked through the local homeless coalition, have done outreach to other local shelters and have opened the program to referrals from other shelters.
- Program goals are long-term and process-oriented. Education is an "open-ended conversation" that the learner must be able to take where she or he needs to go. The

program is one step forward on a long road that may also include steps backward. Outcomes may not be evident for many years.

- The Program Coordinator has a respectful, holistic and caring approach to dealing with clients. She has arranged medical services and even swimming, basketball and other sports for participants.

- The Coordinator and shelter partners have a very broad concept of education that includes activities focused on self-esteem, coping skills, life skills and developing peer support.

- The in-house ESL class is easy for homeless people to access, and attaches no stigma. It is held in the Y's Boardroom, which is comfortable and attractive and makes learners feel special.

- The Program Coordinator has worked individually with some guests enrolled in this program on self-esteem and life-skills (e.g. budgeting). She has begun to develop workshops on these topics that could be shared by other participants.

- ABE and GED participants are mainstreamed directly into the Greater Lawrence Adult Learning Center.

## Program Strengths

- The Program Coordinator has worked extensively with homeless people and housing issues, and is currently the YWCA Shelter's Residential Director. She also has a background in education and counseling. This dual orientation gives her a very grounded and holistic vision for the program, and a wide range of skills for making it work. Through her working with many community groups from the homeless coalition to the Regional Employment Board, she brings an awareness of the broader political and economic climate in which the program is operating.

- The Lawrence Program offers access to learning activities for people who would not be accepted by other education and training programs, those who have "hit bottom." It has only two eligibility criteria: that a homeless person be interested in improving his or her skills or getting a GED; and that he or she be sober or drug-free for 30 days before entering class. The Coordinator/Counselor and Shelter Director work with those who want to achieve the the 30 days of sobriety.

- The Program tries to respond to the whole range of concerns that affect learners' success and well-being. It offers a network of continuous support, beginning when people decide to enter the program. Multiple channels for counseling, advocacy and support are available from the Coordinator and the shelter staff. For ESL learners, the teacher and peers are another source. The Learning Center offers educational counseling and job development.

- Besides counseling, daycare, transportation, and medical services which are available to learners; in response to learner requests, the Coordinator also arranged to make the Y's sports facilities available.

- A strong partnership has developed between shelter partners, based on a shared "learner-centered" concept of education that responds to learner goals and needs. Guests are encouraged to take control of their lives at their own pace, in the order of priority that makes sense to them. At both shelters, guests can stay as long as they are working towards their goals.

- The Lawrence EPH has multiple goals for its educational program: to build self-esteem and confidence; to help with goal-setting and identifying options for the future; to provide a positive, unpressured way to re-connect learners with educational systems; to upgrade participants' basic skills; and to respond to participants' learning needs and interests, including life management skills.

- The program has been successful at both recruitment and retention. At the four month point, 16 learners had been enrolled-- more than 2/3 of the projected annual total of 25. This includes about 25% Hispanic learners. Thirteen of the 16 participants were still enrolled.

- Participants and staff have reported success at one major goal, improving learners' self-esteem. The Daybreak Director reported that she "can see changes in attitude, a glimmer of hope." Guests have also reported the positive effects of discovering that they do have the capacity to learn, in spite of all they've been through and all they face.

- Learners are finding that recovery and educational goals can be mutually reinforcing. Educational success boosts self-esteem and also makes it easier to benefit from 12-step literature, which for most people is a lynchpin of recovery.

- The ESL class has a caring and committed instructor, who emphasizes that: "A teacher's ability to give a sense of caring is critical to this program. Self-worth comes through when you see someone cares, someone appreciates the hard work you're doing. You're not just a 'loser' anymore."

- Peer support has developed among learners in the ESL class and at the shelter. Guests help each other with homework, convey messages about absent learners, and refer their friends to the program.

- The Coordinator has a problem-solving orientation to disputes and differences between program partners. She sees partnership as a developmental process. Even in areas where the Adult Learning Center's approach fundamentally conflicts with her own, the Coordinator has identified strategies for improving communication and coordination.

## Concerns & Tensions

- Overall Orientation: The Adult Learning Center has a very different orientation to providing education to homeless individuals than the other partners do. Serving the homeless is not central to the Learning Center's mission, as it is for the other two partners. They have significantly different views of this program's purpose, target population, curriculum and learning environment.

- Targeting Recovering People: The Coordinator and Daybreak Director are very committed to making this program accessible to newly recovering homeless guests who are often viewed as less worthy and acceptable than mothers and families. The ALC "would never have targeted a shelter for recovering alcoholics because their main focus should be on sobriety, not education, which can be frustrating for newly sober people."

The program asks that participants be sober for 30 days before entering classes, while the ALC intake worker would require at least six months.

- Skills & Credential Levels: Shelter partners believe that all homeless individuals who are interested in learning and gaining skills should be eligible to enter this program, whether or not they already have a GED. The ALC believes that it is "an exercise in futility" to refer to them learners who already have a GED. Several guests who want to enter the ALC to work on specific skills like writing have been "bounced." The ALC referred these learners to the community college because they had the GED, even though the learners didn't feel ready to go there. ABE Learners with very low reading and writing skills are also underserved by the ALC. Those who have 0 - 4th grade skill levels are matched with volunteer tutors, but are not able to enter classes.

- Motivation & Readiness: The ALC believes that only "homeless individuals who want to be educated and who have clear goals" will succeed in the Learning Center. They suggest that the shelter partners offer some kind of "Pre-Educational Program Activity" (counseling, peer support) to prepare less focused and confident guests to enter the ALC. This is starkly at odds with the Coordinator's vision of developing a program where all people can find "an element of hope," where those who have "hit bottom" can find support and affirmation to begin moving forward.

- Concept of Education: The YWCA and Daybreak believe that curriculum should respond directly to learners' needs and concerns, including self-esteem, coping, financial management, career exploration and other life skills. Yet, the Coordinator's individualized counseling is the only program component that makes these concerns a priority. The ESL class works indirectly on self-esteem and building peer support; the Learning Center's curriculum focuses primarily on attaining academic skills, secondarily on pre-vocational skills, and very little on self-esteem or life skills.

- Learning Environment: The Coordinator and shelter partners see supportive relationships with teachers, counselors and peers as a critical condition for effective learning. Yet, most participants are directly mainstreamed into the ALC; and the unstructured, self-paced program there doesn't offer homeless learners the direction and reinforcement many of them need. Learners at ALC don't have sustained relationships with teachers or peers where they can be supported in their efforts, as the ESL learners do. The noise and the predominance of young learners at the ALC is a barrier for some homeless adult learners.

- Fear of "Stigmatizing" may be keeping participants from getting support they need from both teachers and fellow students. Only the ALC intake worker knows that these learners are struggling with homelessness, poverty, recovery and multiple other problems as they also confront educational challenges. While this is intended to be positive, to avoid stereotyping, in the absence of comprehensive support networks it may in fact be a liability. It protects the ALC's staff and regular clients from knowing that there are homeless among them; but it doesn't help homeless learners get the support they need.

- Limited Information on Homelessness: Teacher and tutors have not been trained to respond to homeless people's needs and concerns. Given the hostile political climate in Lawrence, training will need to identify and overcome stereotypes and biases about poverty, race and substance abuse, as well as homelessness. In a training the Coordinator attended, volunteers expressed preferences for working with every ethnic group except Hispanics, Lawrence's largest minority. This went unchallenged.

Effective training is particularly critical because the learners at the very lowest skill levels only have access to tutors, not teachers.

- Multiple Layers of Intake: Guests have to go through multiple layers of intake to get into the ABE program. After talking with the Shelter Director and the Program Coordinator, ABE and GED participants still have to go through the ALC's standard intake, which includes more forms and more discussion of goals as well as diagnostic testing. At each stage, the learner is making contact with someone who could be her advocate; but she also has to re-tell her story and re-state her goals and concerns each time. Having to making their own intake appointment and going on their own to the ALC is very difficult for some people who aren't very comfortable going into a strange place and dealing with unfamiliar staff. The network of personal connection and support breaks down at that point.

- Partnership Division of Labor: The ALC has not been willing to adapt their rules and procedures for this group of learners, and the other partners believe that effective services hinge on ALC's willingness to be "more flexible and accepting," to approach homeless learners on a case-by-case basis and to consider the special needs and challenges they face. The ALC clearly expects that homeless learners should be able to go through standard procedures, that they should be prepared to enter the program. From the ALC's perspective, developing special procedures would add to a program that already demands too much administrative time-- for which they are not compensated. In their view, it is excessive to expect that all partner agencies attend statewide meetings.

- Staffing: A program with a holistic view of homeless education requires a great deal of coordination, documentation and information sharing, most of which falls on the Program Coordinator. Differences among partners about eligibility and procedure increase this load. The Program Coordinator also attempts to provide an ongoing channel for learner support and advocacy, a big task given the range of problems learners bring. The Coordinator tries to fill in the gaps by following learners' progress and offering counseling for the many learners who don't find that in the classroom. Finally, the Coordinator has been working on a very innovative curriculum to respond to learner needs; but she has doesn't have enough time to implement this curriculum herself and there isn't yet another way to do it.

## II. Program Design and Implementation

### Education Services Offered

- Type and Schedule of Educational Services

The Lawrence Education Program for the Homeless offers two very different educational experiences to the learners it serves. ESL learners are provided instruction in a small, supportive class that meets in-house at the YWCA, as described above. ABE and GED learners are mainstreamed directly into the Adult Learning Center, where a large number of students work independently in an open, unstructured class, with teachers and tutors available to assist them. (By fall, ALC will place all students in classes of 10-12.) EPH support and counseling services are available to participants in both components.

This program's initial goal was to mainstream all learners into the ALC. It was necessary to begin a separate ESL class because no ESL classes are available at the Center. (ALC does do other ESL classes for Welfare and JTPA clients.) This class has proved so successful that all partners have begun to question whether all homeless learners should not at least start out in a separate class, which offers more teacher and peer support than the ALC's self-paced format.

ESL classes meet in the YWCA boardroom three afternoons each week: 3:30 - 5:00 p.m. Tuesday, 1:00- 3:30 p.m. Wednesday and 1:00 - 3:30 p.m. Friday, for a total of six and a half hours of instruction. (The program seeks to provide learners with six hours per week of instruction for at least five weeks.)

The Adult Learning Center is open for classes Monday through Thursday from 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m., as well as 6:45 - 8:00 p.m. Monday and Wednesday evenings. At the time of the evaluation visit, student hours at ALC were variable, with only a few set classes.

- Learner Recruitment & Intake

**Targeted Populations**

The Lawrence YWCA Program works with any homeless person who is interested in learning-- starting with newly recovering alcoholics and addicts. Using education to make contact with those who have "hit bottom" is deeply embedded in this program's philosophy. It is also an element of contention between the partners.

The Coordinator sees the EPH as an opportunity to extend an element of hope and affirmation for people taking the first steps towards improving their lives. For the Daybreak Director, recovery and education are "all one process," linked by the 12 steps. Both believe that the program should not require a "massive commitment." They think that educators and shelter workers need to "sift through motivation issues and change their ideas about what it means for people to be trying." The Intake Counselor at the Adult Learning Center, on the other hand, believes that it is mistake to include a shelter for recovering substance abusers in this program: "Their main focus should be on sobriety, not education. Education can be frustrating for the newly sober." This conflict has been problematic for the program since the Coordinator must refer ABE and GED learners to this counselor for testing before they can be enrolled at the ALC.

The EPH Coordinator has also tried make the program accessible to physically and mentally challenged learners. She has sought medical services for one participant with a damaged eye, and has helped others to access SSI or Medicaid when eligible. The Y's Transitional Shelter accepts homeless women served by the Department of Mental Health. These women are generally provided instruction by Massachusetts Rehabilitation, but the educational program is prepared to enroll them as needed.

**Eligibility**

The Lawrence Program has only two eligibility criteria: that a homeless individual be interested in improving his or her skills or getting a GED; and that he or she be sober or drug-free for 30 days before entering class. The Program established the 30 day threshold because "before then guests are too muddle-headed-- they would get off to a bad start or get frustrated and quit." Shelter staff and the EPH Coordinator counsel and encourage prospective learners throughout this period. They feel that the option to enter class offers a benefit, one more reason not to drink or use drugs. The two individuals who had to wait to achieve 30 days before entering the program did so successfully. As mentioned earlier, the ALC counselor believes that learners should be sober for six months before they enroll and that people who already have their GED's should not be permitted to enroll in the ALC program.

The Coordinator and Shelter Director raised two larger issues: (1) should credentials or skill generally be the criteria for enrollment; and (2) "if a guest says they want or need skills and want to enter the program, is it for staff to assess whether they really need them, when it is hoped that the educational program will offer so many other benefits?" Although the partners had discussed this issue at length they had not resolved it; and several learners were caught in a cycle of wanting to enter the ABE program but being turned away or re-referred by the ALC. This was not a problem for ESL learners, since the EPH Coordinator herself can enroll students and the teacher does any diagnostic testing that is needed.

### Recruitment

The Daybreak Director and the YWCA Residential Director discuss the educational program with homeless guests at their initial shelter intake. Anyone who expresses interest in improving their skills or trying to get a GED is scheduled for an interview with the Program Coordinator. Staff follow up with guests who they think are interested but for some reason are reluctant to enter the program. They also follow up with guests who are newly sober, using AA, counseling and other supports to sustain the 30 days sobriety required for entry. This program has also tried to extend services to guests at other Lawrence shelters. It has done outreach to the largest, Lazarus House. Although one ESL learner was staying at Lazarus House, at the time of the visit, that shelter had not yet made any referrals. The Coordinator has also discussed the program at Homeless Coalition meetings, and has asked for referrals from other shelters, transitional housing and agencies serving the homeless. No street outreach has been undertaken.

- Enrollment & Retention

### Demographics

By late April, the Lawrence Educational Program for the Homeless had enrolled 16 learners, of whom 13 were still active. It is well on the way to meeting the annual goal of providing a minimum of 30 hours instruction to at least 25 learners. Only 2 individuals who had intake interviews at the ALC chose not to enroll in the program. Three learners had achieved 12 hours of classroom instruction (non-classroom activities like counseling are not included in the tally). Five ESL students and 8 ABE students were enrolled at the time of the visit; 2 others were awaiting placement. In less than three months in operation, EPH had served 12 homeless men and 4 homeless women, of whom 10 were white and 4 Hispanic. The majority of learners (10) were in their 20's; 4 in their 30's; and 2 in their 40's.

### Intake Procedures

The Lawrence program has several layers of intake procedure that participants must go through to enter the program. As discussed, potential EPH participants are identified at intake into Daybreak and YWCA residential programs. For guests who express interest or need, Daybreak will draw up a service plan. The education program can be made part of this plan, but it is always voluntary. Information about the educational program has also spread by word of mouth among Daybreak guests.

When a participant is referred by a shelter director, the EPH Coordinator interviews that person privately at the shelter. They generally discuss the learner's educational background and any issues or concerns they may have. The Coordinator uses this time to re-affirm or establish the person's goals, and to "establish a comfort level to enable him or her to move on to dealing with people other than shelter staff." The Coordinator introduces ESL learners directly to the teacher, who does any needed diagnostic testing.

All other learners are referred to the Adult Learning Center for intake counseling and testing. Learners call for their own appointment at the ALC. There they undergo the Center's standard intake procedure, which begins with a registration form and explanation of the program, the GED, the intake testing. The Intake Counselor spends considerable time helping learners identify and talk about their goals for education, training and jobs. She is also very concerned that learners know they have the option not to enroll-- that they not feel "pushed."

Depending on a learner's general skill level, different tests are administered: the Slossen for low-level readers (primary grade levels), ABLE for middle levels, and GED predictors for upper levels (in English only). Very low level readers (0 - 4) are referred to the tutoring office to be matched with a trained tutor, since ALC program does not offer classroom instruction at that level. The ALC counselor can also refer homeless learners to the in-house Job Developer, to a training program, or to the community college. Finally, learners are given a short tour of the learning center.

### Confidentiality & Avoiding Stigma

The Lawrence Program is very concerned not to stigmatize homeless learners who are mainstreamed into the Adult Learning Center. All partners put great emphasis on maintaining confidentiality about learners' homelessness. Only the ALC Intake Counselor knows who has enrolled through the McKinney program; other than the ESL teacher, teachers are not informed. As the Intake Counselor explains it, "I don't target them as being homeless-- that's a terrible stigma. ... I do the intake the same as for all."

ALC administrators do not want stereotypes "to color how we deal with an individual, to predestine them for failure." The teaching staff is divided on this policy; some teachers feel that they do need to know this kind of information about students' lives and concerns. Stigmatizing is not a concern for ESL learners, since they have their own class and generally all know about each others' housing situation.

### Retention

As mentioned, at the time of the visit, 13 of 16 learners were still enrolled. The three who had dropped out of the program did so because of moving or schedule conflicts: one moved, one left with the circus and one took a day job. They all left after four to six weeks in the program, and the partners are considering whether that is a critical point for learners in getting used to the program and getting committed to it. The EPH has a good record of keeping learners connected to the program even after they leave the shelter. Several learners were placed in housing or left the shelter for other reasons, but stayed enrolled in the program.

The program counts a learner as enrolled as long as they are either attending classes or using the counseling services. Tracking ESL learners' attendance has been easy, since the teacher submits a list weekly. For ALC students, who work independently and for variable hours, attendance and progress is harder to follow. The Coordinator is very concerned to offer active support to all participants: "I believe that if we do simple things like keep in touch, be available, people will stay in the program. We don't want people pulling out because of something we've done, or because they feel neglected." She asked to receive attendance records for learners studying at the ALC and has begun to get them regularly.

- Learning Activities, Curriculum and Environment

### Educational Activities and Goals

The Lawrence EPH has multiple goals for its educational program: building self-esteem and confidence; helping with goal-setting and identifying options for the future; providing a positive, unpressured way to re-connect learners with educational systems, particularly the ALC; upgrading participants' basic skills; and responding to participants' learning needs and interests, including life management skills. All three partners expressed similar goals, with only slightly different emphases.

Yet, day-to-day activities reveal significantly different orientations about how education will achieve/address these goals, and what kind of educational activities are appropriate. At the Adult Learning Center, students focus primarily on developing academic skills through independent study using a competency-based curriculum. The ALC uses a modified version of the Jobs for Youth series, which has a pre-employment focus. Computer-aided instruction is also available. The ALC, then, assumes that progress on self-esteem and other goals will be met primarily through the experience of working to gain academic skills and/or a GED. For learners with very low-level reading skills (0 - 4), the ALC relies on volunteer tutors trained on the Commonwealth Literacy Corps "whole language" model, an approach which emphasizes the learning relationships and learner self-esteem as much as skills.

For the ESL teacher (who was hired by the ALC), group interaction, peer learning and work on language survival skills are critical for meeting this program's goals. In the ESL class, group instruction and independent work are integrated. Each lesson includes discussion, drills, worksheets and writing exercises. Learners sometimes talk about issues in their lives, although these are not addressed in the curriculum.

The EPH Coordinator believes that the program needs to address self-esteem issues, goal-setting, and life management skills in a more direct way. She wants to make space within the program to respond to a wide range of learners' needs that may not fall within traditional classroom concerns. At individual sessions, she works on skill areas learners ask for. The Coordinator is also seeking opportunities to integrate these broader educational concerns into the program curriculum. At the time of the visit, she had developed an innovative workshop series on self-esteem, coping strategies, financial management and career exploration. She has also contacted outside agencies like the Credit Counseling Center about possible workshops. The Daybreak Director also supports this broadened curriculum. She believes that many participants would benefit from small group and tutorial work.

**Learning Environments**

Homeless learners in the Lawrence Program go into very different learning environments, depending on whether they are studying Adult Basic Education, GED or English as a Second Language. ESL learners have their own class in the comfortable YWCA boardroom, while ABE and GED learners are mainstreamed right into the Adult Learning Center to do self-paced work in a large, open classes. The ESL and ABE experiences may come to be more alike in the fall, when all the ALC system shifts from a self-paced system to set classes for all learners. In the meantime, the partners have been comparing and assessing the two very different kinds of learning environments and the extent to which they promote or impede learner and program goals.

The ALC offers a self-paced program where learners work individually to meet their learning goals; it attempts to "teach skills, not teach to the [GED] test." Four teachers and a number of volunteer tutors circulate among students at round tables in a large, open room. On the morning of the evaluation visit, about 30 students each worked on his or her own workbook and materials. From 10:00-11:00 a.m. each morning Monday - Thursday, the designated topic is writing skills; from 11:00-12:00 a.m., it is math. The 9:00-10:00 a.m. hour is devoted to social studies or science, on alternate days. The Center was filled with noisy activity. Students chatted and socialized as they worked; people entered and left the room. Bookcases around the room displayed textbooks and materials. Six computers were available for use. A poster announced "today's word: ovoid." Inspirational quotes and signs in English and Spanish were posted around the room. On one side of the Learning Center was a classroom with a large table and chairs where some class instruction is offered. No ABE or GED instructors were interviewed, since none of them know whether they have homeless students.

At the YWCA ESL class, four learners work around a table on the same lesson, a passage which emphasizes verb tenses. A strong spirit of interdependence prevails: learners helped each other keep up and figure out words as they take turns reading aloud. They convey messages to absent members. After only four weeks, learners had begun to open up to each other and to the teacher, to develop great trust. They sometimes talked about living in a shelter, about having a son in jail. Some also talked about their goals. One woman wants to be able to write a letter in English, since her children don't read Spanish and are scattered. Most learners see each other outside the classroom, and some are friends. At the time of the visit, learners were at similar skill levels, so the teacher had not had to work with widely disparate levels in the same class. The group was also small enough that each member could get a lot of individual attention.

The teacher moved between the table and a flipchart, asking and answering questions and checking individual progress. She is enthusiastic, encouraging learners to try a new challenge-- "Who wants to try this?"-- and praising correct answers with "Oh, aren't you terrific!" She emphasizes that "a teacher's ability to give a sense of caring is critical to this program. Self-worth comes through when you see someone cares, someone appreciates the hard work you're doing. You're not just a 'loser' anymore." Shelter directors also praised the learning environment at the ESL class: "It's an ideal set-up for an educational program. The teacher pays a lot of attention to each student as an individual, and many homeless people need the kind of attention they get here. They also appreciate the nice room, feel very respected."

The new learning environment at ALC may come to resemble the ESL class. By the fall, all learners will be placed in classes of 10-12 and will be grouped by skills level. Administrators believe that this will break down isolation and help students feel more committed to their program. It will help them learn from other students, and be listened to by other students. Critiques of the existing program were offered: it "pushes teachers to work more with those who ask for help, who may be more motivated to meet their goals. The classroom system will make it easier for them to reach those who aren't so clear about goals, or who may be reluctant to ask for help." Classes will also lay out a clearer path for learning and will keep closer track of individual progress; learners won't get stuck or keep re-doing material, as they sometimes do now. One negative effect of the switch will be that the Center will serve fewer learners.

- Student Evaluation

In its first few months of operation, this program had not needed to address in depth the issue of student assessment. All learners have folders where their work in kept. Each folder has a record sheet where activities are recorded. Teachers review these periodically. They also administer unit tests and, for students preparing for the GED, practice tests.

The Coordinator periodically reviews student goals with learners to determine whether these have been met or have changed. The Daybreak Shelter Director noted that her daily contact with guests makes it easier for her to assess students' progress on self-esteem and life skills. Students generally tell her of any problems. She also receives attendance records.

- Teacher & Tutor Selection, Training & Support

The ALC has four core teachers, job developers and intake counselors; several started under CETA programs and have been with the Center for much of its 17 years. They also have part-time teachers who generally work on special programs. The ALC has several bilingual staff. New teachers have a week of in-house orientation. Full-time teachers have 24 hours of in-service training per year (2 full days and several half days); many part-time teachers, who have several jobs, cannot attend. ALC teachers select topics for in-service; last year, they learned about the new Jobs For Youth curriculum, the new GED test and AIDS. The International Institute offered a cross-cultural orientation. The EPH program is planning an ALC training on homelessness for early fall, since all agree that ALC staff generally don't know enough about the concerns of homeless learners and that this is a barrier to effectively serving them.

The ALC has recruited and trained about 150 tutors, of whom 100 are still active. This effort is managed by a Commonwealth Literacy Campaign (CLC) Coordinator. Some ALC tutors assist in the Learning Center, but most do one-on-one tutoring with learners who have very low-level skills (0 - 4 reading) and with some ESL students. It is rare for students to have both a tutor and a teacher.

Tutors are supported through monthly meetings and newsletters focused on topics of concern to them. Tutor training does not include information on homelessness. The EPH Coordinator attended the tutor training, and was disturbed by the fact that materials designed to help volunteers surface and examine their biases were, in fact, reinforcing existing prejudices.

- Learning Outcomes

In only three months of operation, this program has done a lot for participants' self-esteem. Daybreak's Director offered an example: "One particular guest was in and out of our shelter and never able to get onto a recovery program. He was filled with anger and with very low self-esteem, and he also had a reading comprehension problem. It was a huge breakthrough for him to realize that he could read. It was the first step in understanding that he doesn't have to stay stuck in his present situation." She emphasized that there is a "good synergy between reading and recovery from substance abuse." They are not competing efforts. Finding that they have the capacity to learn, in spite of everything, gives many participants a sense of accomplishment, well-being and self-worth that reinforces their determination to stay drug or alcohol free. Participants appreciate being able to read 12-step literature, and program participants often read and do homework together at the shelter. She believes that this program is good for the shelter in other ways: "It de-stigmatizes the shelter when the community knows that guests are involved with an educational program that is geared to self-improvement."

Several ESL learners have told her they are amazed and very appreciative to have a teacher pay attention to them, to have a nice place to study. The ESL teacher counts her class' sense of community as a very positive development. Between the shelter, the Coordinator and the class: "They have terrific support, a network of people who care." The EPH Coordinator acknowledged this success, but cautioned against focusing on observable outcomes: "I don't think in a program like this we'll ever see even 10% of the positive. We may see it down the road, long-term. The experience should be an open-ended conversation, a dialogue, which can go where the learner wants it to. There will be steps backward, as well as forward."

## Program Organization

- Partnership

This program has nurtured a rich and mutual partnership between the YWCA and Daybreak Shelter, and is attempting to include other interested shelters in this alliance. The YWCA and Daybreak Shelter share a "deep commitment to working with homeless problems;" both are in daily contact with homeless people. The two agencies have a "fairly decent understanding of each other's concerns and constraints" and are not competitive. The Program Coordinator and Daybreak Director communicate regularly by phone and face to face; they discuss participants' progress and new recruits, as well as programmatic issues. They share intake information, attendance records and other relevant documents. The Coordinator goes to Daybreak to interview guests and the Daybreak Coordinator has visited the Y. They have attended statewide coalition meetings together, and regularly attend meetings of the Lawrence Coalition for the Homeless.

On the other hand, at the time of the evaluation visit, the working relationship between these two shelters and the Lawrence Adult Learning Center was in a "developmental" stage-- only four months old-- and tensions were evident at several levels, as already described. Despite similarities in their stated program goals, the Coordinator and the ALC (and to a lesser extent the Daybreak Director and the ALC) disagreed on several key issues: the inclusion of a "wet" shelter in this program; the referral of learners who already have GEDs; the 30-day sobriety rule; and the expectation that homeless guests will in all respects be treated as regular ALC learners, with no special procedures or support.

Eligibility, curriculum and learning environment are three areas where this underlying philosophical difference is evident. Shelter partners strive to be inclusive of all homeless people interested in learning and to minimize eligibility criteria, while the ALC focuses on learners' readiness, motivation and commitment to learning. The YWCA and Daybreak want curriculum to respond directly to learners' needs and concerns, including self-esteem, coping, financial management, career exploration and other life skills. The Learning Center's curriculum, on the other hand, focuses primarily on attaining academic skills, secondarily on pre-vocational skills, and very little on self-esteem or life skills. The Y and Daybreak see the establishment of supportive relationships with teachers, counselors and peers as a critical condition for effective learning; while the ALC immediately mainstreams homeless learners into an individualized, self-paced learning program.

The Program Coordinator acknowledges these differences in philosophy and emphasis, but does not think that they make the partnership unworkable. She has a "problem-solving" approach to improving partnership, and has identified three problem areas to address: inadequate communication between herself and the ALC; the ALC's limited knowledge of homeless people; and what she perceives as the ALC's inflexibility about rules and procedures:

> "If we can make just one change, it would be to get the ALC staff to be a little more flexible and accepting. I understand the need for rules; but we need to approach people on a case-by-case basis. It's generally good to avoid creating dependency by expecting learners to call for appointments, to work at their own pace. But these people are on the brink. You have to look at the whole person, not just their academic skills. People don't get the support over there that they get here."

She has faith that these issues can be worked out over time, and has scheduled several workshops to familiarize the education providers with homeless issues. She is also attempting to involve all three partners in regular monthly meetings.

From the ALC's perspective, the ALC is fulfilling the terms of the partnership and the program is working well. ALC administrators emphasized the program's success in linking homeless individuals directly to an existing program without setting up a duplicate system. The partnership problems they identify are: excessive administrative and time demands and lack of clarity on "who does what." By directly mainstreaming homeless learners, they are fulfilling program goals. They have enrolled all learners referred by this program who fit their usual criteria: adults age 18 and over who have not received a GED or diploma and who have somewhat clear educational goals. On the question of adopting new procedures geared to this group, they are not the lead agency on this project, and they receive no compensation for administrative time or for students who attend the ALC. The Intake Counselor, who they consider the "real linkage" between ALC and the other partners, is in regular contact with the Program Coordinator and is supplying her with attendance records and information on student progress. The Program Developer has attended partner meetings in Lawrence, but she does not have time to attend statewide meetings.

- Coordination and Management

### Coordinator Roles and Activities

In the 14 hours per week that she works on the EPH program, the Coordinator has primary responsibility for a wide range of program and learner activities: enrollment, student counseling, support and documentation, program administration, and reporting and liaison with the State Coordinator. In addition, she develops curriculum to respond to participants' needs, something she'd like more time to do. She also does recruitment at the Y and through the homeless coalition.

A large part of the Coordinator's work involves documenting program and learner activities, and circulating relevant information to the other partners. Shelter directors refer prospective participants to her, and she interviews them herself before sending them on to the ALC or the ESL class. In this session, she establishes a working relationship that allows her to offer participants sustained support while they are in the program. The Coordinator also collects information on participants' skill levels, attendance and progress from the ALC and ESL teacher; in turn, she reports on attendance and progress to the Shelter Director. She relates to the Shelter Director any learner concerns that she cannot address. The Coordinator also assumes primary responsibility for follow-up with learners who leave the program, with assistance from the shelters. Finally, she arranges partnership meetings where program planning can be addressed.

The Coordinator spends considerably more than 14 hours each week working on EPH. She got the program off the ground quickly. She also began operationalizing a very holistic approach to dealing with homeless learners, and one that makes great demands on her time. The Coordinator made herself available to participants for counseling or discussion when they needed it. She put in place daycare and transportation systems, and sought out additional services: eye examinations and treatment, help with immigration issues, access to sports facilities and equipment. In her view, this level of commitment was critical for an effective education program: "People with problems are our regular people. We have to deal with the whole person-- and sometimes you have to work through a lot of other issues at the same time as you're dealing with education."

- Support Services

The Greater Lawrence EPH proposal included counseling and daycare as the support services that would make this program accessible and sustainable for homeless learners. Counseling has turned out to be critical for most learners' success in the program; daycare has not. A trained daycare worker was enlisted, but her services have not yet been needed, since no women with children have enrolled in the program. Although learners have to travel between the shelter and classes at either the ALC or the Y, it is not funded. Daybreak staff, and occasionally the ESL teacher and the Coordinator, help out with transportation when public transport isn't adequate.

### Counseling

As discussed, the Program Coordinator offers learners general counseling and advocacy on a range of issues that bear on their success in the program. Besides educational goals and problems, learners discuss visa issues, family concerns, financial problems and how they feel in general. In addition, counseling provides an additional channel for maintaining contact with learners and identifying problems that might otherwise lead them to drop out. Learners come to the Coordinator with problems or issues that have come up in their classes. One learner, who the Learning Center referred to the community college, came back to her to appeal that decision, and another who was afraid to go for an appointment there came back for one-on-one counseling. Another came in to tell the Coordinator when he felt he had to take a break from classes. Others brought in friends to enter the program.

Daybreak Shelter offers similar "curbstone counseling" to help guests work towards recovery and reintegrate into the community. Staff try to offer guests whatever support they need to identify and work towards their goals. Sobriety or getting clean is usually the first goal. AA meetings are offered three times/week on-site and staff also offer transportation to off-site AA and NA meetings. Daybreak can also help guests enter residential treatment programs or get formal counseling from the Psychological Center. A shelter specialist who comes in twice a week (a total of seven hours) is another active advocate for guests. Daybreak also uses support groups to build peer support, another resource for recovery.

The Adult Learning Center offers educational and pre-employment counseling.

**Referrals**

The Learning Center and the Program Coordinator can refer learners to training programs or to community college. The ALC has a job developer who can work with EPH learners as needed. Daybreak also seeks referrals for guests who want training or employment. In addition, it offers housing referrals and linkages to other social services such as SSI, medicare, veterans' benefits, etc. The EPH Coordinator has made referrals to Massachusetts Rehabilitation and the Commission for the Blind.

- Barriers/Incentives to Participation

**Incentives**

The Greater Lawrence EPH program offers a number of incentives for participation. First, it offers a chance to improve educational skills or complete a GED, when most other education and training programs would not enroll a homeless learner, particularly not a recovering one. The Coordinator/Counselor and Shelter Director are accessible and accepting; they will work with individuals to achieve the 30 days of sobriety needed to begin classes. They are prepared to respond to the whole range of learners' support needs throughout the program. Many learners find that recovery and educational goals are mutually reinforcing: educational success boosts self-esteem and also makes it easier to benefit from 12-step literature. ESL learners also have active support from teachers and peers. Transportation and daycare are readily available. Participants have access to the Y's gym and pool.

**Barriers**

The program has set up multiple layers of intake through which learners pass as they enter the program. After talking with the Shelter Director and the Program Coordinator, ABE and GED participants still have to go through the ALC's regular intake, which includes more forms and more discussion of goals as well as diagnostic testing. At each stage, the learner is making contact with someone who could be her advocate; but she also has to re-tell her story and re-state her goals and concerns each time.

The Adult Learning Center's more restrictive concept of eligibility presents a barrier for many homeless learners. A person who has struggled through 30 days of sobriety to enter classes meets with an intake counselor who believes he isn't ready to focus on education. A recovering shelter resident who wants to work on his writing skills is bounced back and forth: referred to ALC by the Coordinator and by the ALC to the community college-- although he protests that he can't survive there-- because he already has a GED.

The ALC's structure and procedures also offer a number of barriers to homeless learners. A Daybreak guest who wants to enter the ALC program is told that she will have to make an appointment to be tested there. Several older homeless learners come to enroll but are put off by fact that the Center is noisy and most learners there are young. The unstructured, self-paced nature of the ALC program is very intimidating for many homeless learners because it doesn't offer the direction and reinforcement they need, although this may change when the ALC moves to a classroom format in the fall. Finally, "fear of stigmatizing"-- the fact that only the ALC intake worker knows that these learners are struggling with homelessness, poverty, recovery and multiple other problems as they also confront educational challenges-- is a liability. It is at odds with the holistic approach that has worked so well for the ESL and counseling components of this program.

At the programmatic level, the shelter partners' and education provider's different approaches, in itself, present a significant barrier to delivering coordinated education services to homeless individuals. The fact that the education provider is not in any way compensated for administrative time may also be a barrier to their adapting more flexible rules and procedures for this group of learners.

- Transition & Follow-Up

**Transition**

Transition is a different kind of problem for this program than it is for many other programs. Mainstreaming homeless learners directly into the Learning Center as their first educational contact is, in itself, a form of transition, and often an abrupt one. The shelter partners and the ALC view this transition very differently. The shelter partners assume that homeless learners will need, and should get, appropriate learning activities and environments and extensive support to make success possible. The ALC, on the receiving end, assumes that support should have been offered upfront as "pre-educational program activities" to help learners clarify their goals and gain motivation to succeed. They expect that learners entering their program will be able to succeed through the normal rules and channels, and are not prepared to offer extra support to homeless learners. The EPH Coordinator tries to fill in these gaps by following ALC learners' progress and offering counseling, but this is not a substitute for an educational program that is, in itself, supportive.

Ironically, this program faces the opposite problem for its ESL learners. The program's ESL class offers a great deal of support; but there is no ALC program into which to transition ESL learners who might prefer to move on, since the ALC does not operate ESL classes (except for targeted groups). The local high school does operate ESL programs, but with few openings.

In its first four months, the only instance in which the EPH program had addressed transition to skills training or college was the unresolved case of the learner who wanted to stay at the Learning Center to work on writing and who had been referred to the community college because he had a GED.

**Follow-Up**

At the time of the visit, the EPH program had not had significant problems with follow-up. Several participants stayed enrolled or in contact after they left Daybreak shelter. Another participant took a "break" from the program, and talked with the Coordinator beforehand. The shelter also tries to follow up with guests who leave. One participant took a job that conflicted with his scheduled class; he was due to begin evening classes. They lost contact with two learners who moved, but both moved a long distance.

- Program Assessment

As a pilot program, the EPH tried to "cover all the bases it could." In only a few months of operation, it hadn't undertaken any systematic assessment. The Coordinator was responsible for preparing quarterly reports, which the other partners reviewed. They expected to do a serious assessment before writing the next year's RFP. The YWCA, Daybreak Shelter and the Adult Learning Center all have advisory boards, and the ALC also reports to the Lawrence School Committee, but none of these make policy decisions on this program. Homeless learners aren't represented on any of these bodies.

- Expansion/Innovation of Services

The Greater Lawrence YWCA's Educational Program for the Homeless is a new program, still learning how to operationalize its vision of how educational activities can help homeless individuals gain self-esteem and direction as well as reading, writing, math or English skills. As a partnership, the EPH is working out communication issues and coordination issues. At the four month point, the shelter partners and the educational provider have different ideas about the direction in which they would like the program to move.

The Coordinator would like to see:

- More homeless coalition involvement in creating an alliance of shelters committed to providing an educational range of services;
- A somewhat stable group of enrolled learners, so that the program doesn't have to keep doing recruitment;
- More opportunity to integrate activities that respond to learners' broader educational needs, such as the workshops on self-esteem, coping, financial management and other life skills that she has developed;
- More individualized attention and support for learners who enter the Adult Learning Center;
- More time or funds for counseling; and
- Computer, audio equipment, software and language tapes for learners to practice their skills.

The Adult Learning Center would like to see:

- Pre-educational program activities to prepare homeless individuals for work at the learning center through clarifying goals and supporting motivation; and
- Fewer demands for participation in statewide meetings.

The Daybreak Shelter would like to see:

- A better understanding on the part of the state of homelessness, with a systematic approach that would follow clients through the system to the end, until they are employed; and
- Better linkages with on-the-job training in skill areas that would be economically sustainable.

## III. Recommendations To the Program

- The Greater Lawrence Education Program for the Homeless should review its policy of mainstreaming ABE and GED learners into the Adult Learning Center, in view of the fact that the ALC has not met homeless learners' support needs at a level comparable to the support the ESL and counseling components have offered.

- The EPH shelter partners should do everything possible to keep providing services to newly recovering shelter residents. The program should, further, explore ways to document learners' experiences with the "synergy between learning and recovery."

- The EPH should clarify its policy on offering remediation to learners who already have a GED or diploma, and should do everything possible to offer services to these individuals.

- The EPH should assess whether the volunteer tutoring ALC provides offers adequate services to homeless learners with very low-level skills (0 - 4).

- The Coordinator should find ways to integrate her innovative life-skills and self-esteem workshops for homeless learners into regular classroom activities. The State should consider supporting her in developing this curriculum series.

- The EPH program should review its policy of not sharing with teachers information about homeless learners who are referred into the ALC.

- Training about homelessness and the needs of homeless learners should be offered to ALC teachers, tutors and staff at the earliest possible date. This training should include not only information, but also opportunities to surface and challenge preconceptions about homelessness. In view of the prevailing racial climate and the potential for carrying biases into learning relationships, racial awareness training should also be required for tutors and teachers.

- The program should consider how its intake procedure could be streamlined. Is there a way that intake could continue to offer learners valuable contact with advocates, without demanding that they complete multiple layers of forms and interviews?

- The ALC should consider whether it can be more flexible in its procedures for dealing with homeless learners and its expectations that only homeless guests who are clear on goals and highly motivated are appropriate for the Learning Center.

- The program should find resources to provide the Coordinator with assistance in documentation, administration and clerical tasks, so that her job becomes more manageable. The program would benefit from having more of her considerable skills devoted to curriculum and counseling.

- The program should consider counting non-classroom educational activities such as counseling in its tally of contact hours.

- The State should support documentation of the Lawrence Program Coordinator's holistic approach to education as an "open-ended and affirming conversation between educators and homeless learners."

**Evaluation Completed by:** Mary Jo Connelly

**Date of Site Visit:** April 24, 1990

# THE STEP BY STEP PROGRAM

## COMMUNITY ACTION, INC.
TRANSITIONAL HOUSING FOR WOMEN
AND CHILDREN
HAVERHILL

# STATISTICAL PROFILE

*"I want to thank everybody for making it easy for me to go to school, and supporting me. And I hope the program stays as successful as it is now. Thank you!"*

Demographics: N = 6

Learners surveyed in the Community Action, Inc. program were more likely to be white and female. The percentages of learners were distributed equally among the age categories of under 20, 21-25, 26-35. Over half of the participants were single, 16.7% were married. The majority indicated that they had children. All of the respondents indicated that English was their most frequently spoken language and 83.3% of the respondents had lived in Massachusetts over 10 years.

When asked where learners had lived the last six months, 50% indicated that they had lived in shelters, with the remaining 50% living with friends or family. Learners indicated that currently they were living in shelters, streets/subways/parks, and friends (percentages equally distributed). The majority of those interviewed left their last permanent home because of financial reasons or family problems.

Sixty-six and seven-tenths percent of those surveyed indicated that public assistance was their main source of income. All of those were receiving AFDC, medicaid and WIC. Eighty-three percent were receiving food stamps. The remaining indicated that employment was their main source of income. All of the respondents indicated that they had worked in the past. Sixty-six and seven-tenths percent indicated that they were looking for work.

Education

All of those interviewed reported that they had completed 8 grades or more of school. Thirty-three percent had completed 10 grades or more and 33% had finished 12 grades or obtained a GED. Less than half indicated that they had previously been in adult education classes. The majority indicated that at this time in their life they would not have gone to an education program on their own.

The overwhelming majority indicated that this was their first time in the program. All of those interviewed had been in the program a minimum of four weeks and the majority learned about the program from a shelter counselor. Learners indicated that their main reasons for enrolling in the program were: to get a GED; to do math better; to write better; to get a job; to read to kids; to get a better job; and to better myself in general. All respondents indicated that they were studying math. Other things being studied were: reading; writing; and for the GED.

Half of those surveyed indicated that the program was giving them what they expected, and that they expected to improve reading and math, learn to be independent, and to get a GED. Sixty-six and seven-tenths percent indicated that there was something about the program they wanted to change. Changes suggested were: meals on sight; more time in school; more books; and smoking in class. All of those surveyed felt that they had changed.

Some of the main ways learners felt they had changed were: not embarrassed by what I do not know; have control over future; excited about learning and want to learn more; do math better; read better; more self confidence; read to my children; can ask for help when I need it; and am meeting my educational goals.

Eighty-three and three tenths percent of the learners interviewed said that they like having classes part of the shelter, and 66.7% indicated that it was difficult to come to the program sometimes. The most frequent reasons were: other appointments to keep; do not want to leave kids; and life in the shelter makes it hard. The majority indicated that they would like to continue after they leave then shelter and stated that support from teachers, transportation, and good daycare would help them.

Learners stated that they would like to take GED classes, job training and vocational educational classes once they leave. Sixty-six and seven tenths percent said that they would like to attend college. Eighty-three and three-tenths percent stated that education was very important when compared to other services they need.

# PROGRAM PROFILE

## I. Program Summary

### History and Context

The Step-By-Step Program, an initiative of Haverhill's Community Action, Inc. (CAI), was funded in January 1990 by a federal McKinney grant to provide adult education services to homeless individuals in three different towns. The program has three arms, each serving a distinct homeless population: homeless individuals (mostly alcoholic and drug addicted men) at the CAI Drop-In Center in Haverhill; young single mothers at the Transitional House for Women and Children (THWC) in Amesbury; and seasonally homeless adults in Salisbury who spend the Summer in campgrounds and in Winter live in beach hotels, motels, and cottages. Step-By-Step has recently created a fourth arm, beginning outreach to the homeless individuals and families who come through CAI's Amesbury offices.

This initiative links three components within a large anti-poverty agency that has extensive experience with both adult education and homeless services. It also brings in a small transition and recovery program for homeless women and children (THWC). At the center of this constellation of programs is the CAI Employment and Training (ET) Director, who coordinates these distinct arms of the Step-by-Step initiative. The grant funds a 30 hour/week instructor, who divides her time between several sites at a time; (it also funds childcare, transportation, supplies and some vocational counseling). In the program's first quarter, it served 13 learners at the three sites. At the time of the site visit, in early June, the Salisbury program closed for the season in May, and the Amesbury CAI outreach just got started at that point.

- Community Action, Inc.

  Community Action, Inc. (CAI) is a 25-year old private non-profit community-based organization that serves Haverhill and 10 other cities and towns in the lower Merrimack Valley. Its $5.3 million annual operating budget draws primarily on federal, state and local government grants and contracts. The agency's purpose is to meet the multiple needs of low-income individuals and families in the region, enabling them "to attain the skills, knowledge and motivation needed to become self-sufficient." CAI's Employment and Training component operates many programs addressing skills training and transition to employment, including: Machine Tool Training; Health Career Training; Supported Work for AFDC and General Relief Recipients; a Career Exploration and Education Center; Summer Youth Employment and Training; and Entry Employment Experience Program for adolescent dropouts. CAI also provides educational services on their own and as part of employment training. They are currently offering Adult Basic Education (ABE) and GED classes in Haverhill, Amesbury and at the Lawrence Housing Authority, as well as Workplace Education in Woburn. CAI has 20 years of experience in teaching ABE, GED and employment training to disadvantaged adults.

Besides education, CAI also offers resources and services that addresses many of the practical needs low-income people face as they struggle to be self-sufficient. The agency offers Family Day Care, the WIC Nutrition Program, Head Start, Housing Development and Services, Consumer Protection, Mediation, AIDS Education and Prevention, Advocacy and Outreach, Community Organizing, Fuel Assistance and Commodities Food Distribution. The agency's corridors and waiting areas are filed with reminders of its many activities. Posters remind visitors about the dangers of AIDS, crack, lead paint and smoking. Other signs advertise services like WIC, infant growth monitoring and food stamps. A large chalkboard in the lobby lists this week's fuel oil prices at various local distributors. Copies of the most recent CIA newsletter are stacked on a counter in the lobby.

CAI is located in a tall old building in an area with many old brick buildings and empty lots. It is easy for most clients to reach, one block from a busline. A ramp makes the first floor handicapped-accessible.

- CAI's Homeless Programs

In the past seven years, CAI has developed several programs to serve homeless individuals in Haverhill, Amesbury and Salisbury. Two of these programs come under CAI's Advocacy and Outreach component: the Haverhill Drop-In Center for homeless individuals and the Salisbury Homeless Project. The Drop-In Center offers "a place for street people to go to be warm in the Winter, to get a free meal and clothing, to talk, to get help with public assistance and other benefit programs." It also provides the more than 400 guests it serves each year with advocacy for benefits, housing and employment. Center clients are primarily unemployed or sporadically employed males age 18-45. In the past year, the population has shifted from older alcoholics to more drug-addicted young men. These men spend nights at the Unitarian Universalist Shelter, a 20 bed overnight winter shelter, and Emmaus House, an 8-bed year-round facility that was started by CAI and has since gone independent. Emmaus House is a "dry" shelter (will not accept active substance abusers). The Center is staffed by a Homeless Advocate, with assistance from volunteers. Staff provide counseling and referrals to the Departments of Public Welfare, Mental Health and Public Health, the Visiting Nurses Association, Social Security and other services. They send a lot of clients into de-tox programs, and are there to support them when they come back out.

- The Local Climate

A third CAI program for the homeless has is under the Community Organization component. Community Organization (C.O.) provides casework to help low-income residents get needed services such as food, shelter, clothing, income and medical care, with particular emphasis on housing services and help for the homeless. The CO Amesbury office sees people in real emergency situations: when their temporary solution of doubling up with another household or staying in a boarding house fall through and they are on the streets. Caseworkers in Amesbury have recently been strategizing with CAI's Employment Training Director on how to follow up with homeless individuals and families who come through this office and connect them with Step-By-Step educational services.

The Salisbury Homeless Project, "Families in Transition," was started in August 1989 to serve families living in seasonal housing at Salisbury Beach. Nearly 1,000 people– including over 100 pre-school children– in Salisbury and nearby Hampton Beach, N.H. live in this unstable and often violent environment, moving from Summer campgrounds and trailers to Winter hotels, motels and cottages. Sixty-four percent of the families are headed by teen mothers, about half of whom are on AFDC. The other half are employed, but unable to earn enough to afford rent. They are isolated, without transportation and childcare. Some have drug or alcohol problems, and many are depressed. The Salisbury Homeless Project works with 15 families to address the whole range of their needs: daycare, transportation and referrals to medical, mental health and substance abuse programs, as well as adult education and training programs that will make it possible for participants to become economically self-sufficient.

In addition to providing direct services to the homeless, CAI has also played a role in developing networks among agencies and shelters providing services to the homeless in Haverhill and Salisbury. These groups continue to help disseminate information and coordinate services.

- Transitional Housing for Women and Children (THWC)

CAI's only "outside" partner in the Step-By-Step program is Transitional Housing for Women and Children (THWC) of Amesbury, a non-profit agency serving homeless families from Haverhill, Newburyport, Salisbury, Amesbury and beyond. THWC is an intensive and comprehensive program for young mothers and their children who are in transition from a variety of painful and dysfunctional situations, including drug or alcohol addiction, abuse and battering. The program offers shelter, housing search and a variety of educational and counseling services to 10 single women with young children. Nearly all are high school dropouts with no employment history. THWC has two criteria for entry: that a woman be free from drugs and alcohol, and that she be committed to a recovery program. Guests are referred to THWC from DSS, DPW, other shelters, hospitals, de-tox programs and the police.

All guests at THWC have individual treatment plans, and they are required to be in education or vocational training programs. THWC offers vocational counseling, and will refer guests to appropriate education and training programs. All guests must be in counseling, and the program offers on-site therapy groups as well as referrals to individual counseling. Former substance abusers must attend Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous, and those with a history of child abuse must attend Parents Anonymous. Staff include a Director, a Social Worker, and a Family Life Advocate. They organize a variety of activities, including parenting skills courses, a parenting group and house meetings, most of which are mandatory. The average stay at THWC is nine months, although guests can stay up to a year. THWC serves an annual total of about 20 women.

THWC offers a comfortable facility with a large kitchen and sitting room, two small offices, an indoor playroom with lots of great toys and an outdoor play-yard with a jungle gym, as well as bedrooms for each family. Kitchen walls were alive with children's drawings and posters with inspirational quotes that reflected the program's emphasis on recovery and community: "Feeling better about yourself is the best way to be a good parent" and "Say what you mean, mean what you say, and don't be mean." During a late afternoon visit, half a dozen women gathered in the kitchen to talk, cook and rest-- always keeping a nervous eye on their various children, who alternately played and bickered with each other. Children ranged from a few months to age four or five. Other guests and visitors passed through. An undercurrent of tension disrupted the sociability, as women tried to keep out of each other's way, to keep their cooking or eating area acceptably clean, and to keep their children out of harm.

Abandoned factories are a common sight in the towns of the lower Merrimack Valley, a region that once employed its Greek, Irish, Italian and other immigrant families at manufacturing machine parts and other skilled factory work. In the Merrimack Valley of 1990, the children and grandchildren of these earlier workers face an increasingly difficult struggle to find decent jobs and affordable housing. More and more residents are falling through the cracks: for example, in Amesbury the number of homeless individuals who come to CAI's office for emergency service is up by 63% since last year; and it is estimated that one in six Salisbury schoolchildren is homeless. In Haverhill, Amesbury and Salisbury, most homeless individuals are white and English-speaking. More and more of them are women with children, and young men under 30.

CAI has had some success in provoking citizens of this region to begin to deal with homelessness and its causes. The political climate for collaboration to deliver services seems more favorable here that in many places, and advocacy networks are strong and well-developed here. The City and local agencies fund over $350,000 of the services CAI offers to low-income families. In addition, the City of Haverhill joined with CAI, a local housing partnership and a bank to build two units of low-cost housing in 1989 and four units in 1990, with more planned for the future. These units will be financed at below-market rates, so that monthly payments with taxes for 2-bedroom units will be below $650. While this is still beyond the reach of many poor families, it is a start.

## The Need for Homeless Education Services

There is a clear need for educational services among each of the three populations the Step-By-Step program has targeted. Drop-In Center staff report that many of their guest want help getting and holding a steady job, but few of them have the required academic or occupational skills. Their needs range from Basic Literacy through GED preparation, and from job readiness through skills training. SBS proposed to serve a minimum of 10 clients from the Drop-In Center, and to offer services on-site there.

Most of the single parents at in the Salisbury program are 8th and 11th grade dropouts, some of whom have only 5th grade skill levels. Many of them identify getting a GED as a goal; it's a landmark, something they never attained. These adults also have very low self-esteem. They have had very little opportunity to achieve and to appreciate their own capabilities. The caseworker in Amesbury confirmed this, and added that many families he saw were in trouble in part because of a lack of budgeting and problem solving skills. In its first year, SBS will serve five Salisbury participants. It only began after three months to extend outreach to Amesbury CAI clients, and no numerical goals were set for this effort.

THWC guests also have a need for and an interest in education. Nearly all of them are dropped out of high school around the 9th grade, and few have ever held a job. All THWC guests are required to be enrolled in education or vocational training; yet, very few appropriate programs are available. Several THWC guests have gone directly into CAI's regular employment training programs, which include ABE and GED components. The Director felt that the intense and demanding pace of employment training programs sets guests up for failure-- which they can ill afford. Both the Salisbury and Amesbury programs have also found that these programs to be too rigorous and demanding for their clients. The structure and demands ET programs put on learners, who may be fragile, rusty or lacking confidence, can be explained in large part by the "performance based contracting" funding agencies use to administer these programs. Agencies like CAI are only paid for the education and training they do if participants perform at certain levels and are placed in jobs within a certain period after the training ends. Pressure on CAI translates into pressure on learners to "perform" rather than to learn at their own pace.

- CAI's Approach to Adult Education

Due to the funding mechanisms described above, all of Community Action's recent Adult Basic Education and GED prep offerings have been part of very structured Employment Training programs. Yet, the agency strongly believes in the value of free-standing adult education, where learners can work at their own pace towards self-defined goals. Community Action conceives of "Adult Basic Education" (ABE) as any educational activity that provides adults with skills they need and want. They believe that ABE can be short or long-term. Focusing on small goals like learning to budget or to read to a child are considered equally as valid and important as GED preparation. When McKinney funding because available, one thing that attracted CAI was the opportunity to develop free-standing ABE, which interests homeless adults and many others. In formulating the Step-by-Step Program, CAI emphasized an orientation towards short-term goals, and built in Life Skills and Vocational Counseling components.

CAI's regular ABE curriculum treats 0-8 level skills as all of a piece. Basic Operations in reading, writing and math are taught at the 0-4 level, while the 4-8 "Pre-GED" level introduces Applications building on these. At both the 0-4 and 4-8 levels, math instruction emphasizes "Life Skills Math" for making a budget, calculating weekly pay, using a map, banking, figuring sales tax and interest, and comparing prices. A "Verbal Life Skills" course uses newspapers, signs, letters and other everyday texts to teach basic grammar and punctuation. GED-level instruction is focused on skills and information for passing the test. Materials are drawn from several texts and workbook series. CAI's Job Search, Readiness and Retention courses address a range of topics: applications; sources of information on jobs and community job search resources; strategies for overcoming barriers to findings jobs; resumes; interviewing; employer expectations and issues in job retention. Life skills topics include: supportive relationships; stress management; problem-solving; decision-making; conflict resolution; effective communication; managing resources; budgeting and special topics. At all levels, curricula are competency-based, and assessment is based on students' demonstration of those competencies.

## Program Vision and Goals

- Vision

CAI administrators were particularly interested in developing a homeless education program because they had seen what a "bad fit" existing programs were for the homeless individuals who entered them. Several guests from THWC and the Salisbury Shelter Program had enrolled in CAI employment training programs to work on basic skills, GED and occupational skills. The Employment Training Director and the shelter program staff found that putting guests in these programs was a "set up:" homeless learners were not ready to handle such a demanding curriculum and highly structured learning environment. Their academic failure had serious repercussions on their overall progress: it further undermined their shaky self-esteem and set them moving backward, instead of forward. If the Step-by-Step Program was to offer a useful and accessible form of education to homeless individuals, it would have to be unpressured, affirming and centered on learners' own goals and experience. It would have to address homeless adults' fear of failing at school, and help them work through and counter that fear in an environment where it was impossible to fail. The program would have to help homeless learners set goals they can achieve; it would have to start from where they are, and help them figure out where they want and need to go. While it would not address occupational skills directly, this program could serve as a bridge back to work, training or further schooling.

The Step-by-Step Program was designed to serve the needs of all kinds of homeless learners, with whatever skills levels, interests, goals or personal struggles they might bring into the classroom. CAI was prepared to develop different sites and curricula to fit the needs of different homeless populations. From the outset, Step-by-Step intended to serve at least two vastly different groups: alcohol and drug-addicted men and single mothers in recovery and transition. CAI knew that it would need a particular kind of teacher for this program, a teacher who would "teach everything," who could respond to all different kinds of learners in an affirming and accepting way. The agency was also prepared to arrange whatever support service would be needed to make this program truly accessible: daycare, transportation, academic/vocational counseling.

- Program Goals

The Step-by-Step program's first goal, then, was to fill in a clear gap in program offerings with services appropriate and accessible for homeless learners. Many other people in the community CAI served also sought less pressured and more responsive educational options, but the need was particularly acute for the homeless. The Employment Training Director and the head of the Salisbury project were in agreement that this should be the homeless education program's primary goal. THWC's Director supported this, and added that in her view the education program must work in support of guests' overall recovery goals. It must not only help learners set achievable goals for themselves; but it must set limits as well as goals, reinforcing THWC's goals for that person. Key shelter goals included taking responsibility for oneself and one's choices, and working towards economic self-sufficiency. Education and training are high on their priorities for guests, and they wanted a program that could open doors-- for some, a crack and for others all the way-- to further opportunities. The Drop-In Center Advocate had more modest goals for what education could offer her very troubled and alienated guests. She wanted the chance to learn to be there, for that critical moment when a guest decided that he wanted to take some small step toward restructuring and redirecting his life. The Advocate regarded education as a cornerstone for guests' long-term independence and empowerment; but for the moment, contact with a caring teacher, who didn't really have any connection with the shelter or homeless agency, would mean a lot to Drop-In Center guests.

Community Action's second goal for this initiative was to strengthen ties between service providers trying to address the needs of homeless individuals and families in the region. The Employment Training Director, as lead administrator, oriented the partnership process towards developing an appreciation of each other's goals; she was prepared to work to accommodate a diversity of goals.

## Distinguishing Characteristics

- Project Step-by-Step serves a diversity of learners, including young mothers in recovery or transition, seasonally homeless families and alcoholic or addicted men visitors to a "wet" drop-in center. The CAI program for seasonally homeless people living in hotels and cottages on Salisbury beach is one of very few efforts to work with that homeless population. It is currently expanding to involve the Salisbury school system in supporting homeless children and their parents. THWC is also unique: it is an intensive transition program, where women stay nine months to a year to work on a range of goals besides housing. They regard Step-by-Step as an integral part of their recovery program.

- The lead partner for this project, Community Action, Inc., is a large community-based agency that serves a wide range of low-income people's needs, from food supplements and fuel assistance to employment training and housing development. CAI's anti-poverty mission and its broad experience has given it a very holistic perspective on homeless people and their needs. It also offers a solid base of staff and resources upon which the homeless education program can draw.

- CAI operates job training programs in office skills, health careers, machine tooling and various other areas. These are available for homeless learners who enter through the Step-by-Step bridge and fee they want to continue with these more structured programs.

- Program components within CAI are almost like small agencies in themselves. One component, Education and Training, is taking the lead in this initiative, while two other components-- representing three different homeless programs-- act as partners. The Haverhill Drop-In Center and the Salisbury Homeless Project are under the agency's Advocacy and Outreach component, while the Amesbury casework is part of Community Organization.

- Project Step-by-Step has sought to collaborate with the whole range of interested shelters and homeless service providers. It has worked since the beginning with the Transitional House for Women and Children, and it has been trying to reach out to another Haverhill shelter that has some negative history with CAI.

- CAI has just been awarded a second and much larger McKinney grant to link approximately 200 homeless people in Haverhill, Amesbury and Newburyport with employment and training services. This offers the agency a rare and interesting opportunity to "dovetail" services and recruitment for these two programs. It should be possible not only to connect homeless adults with basic education but also to carry them through training. CAI is working to connect the two programs at all possible points, including shared teachers and joint classes in areas like pre-employment, coordinated support services, and articulated program sequences.

- Step-by-Step is the only freestanding ABE or GED program CAI operates; the others are integrated with employment training programs, and are driven by performance-based funding mandates. The agency welcomes this opportunity to develop less structured and more responsible ABE programming; it is looking to this initiative to develop some effective approaches for doing so.

- Step-by-Step included Life Skills and Vocational Counseling components in its proposal, and CAI can draw on existing staff, curricula and materials to develop these components. The program has been experimenting with the "right mix" of these sessions, and has added and dropped to respond to the concerns of learners currently in the program. They are considering asking a very dynamic trainer for displaced homemakers to offer some Life Skills sessions; she does things like "Getting Over the Cinderella Complex."

- The teacher in this program developed and offered a series of eight lessons (twice a week for four weeks) on reading to children. In this module, homeless mothers experienced being reading to, choosing appropriate and interesting materials, reading to each other and practicing with their own children. Each participant also got to select two or three books of their own from a selection donated by the school system.

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One mother reported to the teacher that this activity "made a monster of my child. Now she demands to be read to every night.

- The teacher has been reading one chapter a day of a novel with the Drop-In Center guests. This offers a "hook" to keep their interest and keep them coming.

- CAI is piloting a unique approach to teaching employability skills. Working from the assumption that job success and retention has a lot to do with people's ability to make decisions and resolve conflicts, the curriculum will start by identifying the kinds of problems people have on the job and why they lose jobs, working backward to employability.

- This program is considering some unique "peer support" approaches to reaching the homeless Amesbury residents who come through CAI's office there. Given the limitations on available personnel and funds, staff are looking for ways to connect clients with others facing similar problems in some sort of support group.

## Program Strengths

- This program serves a wide range of guests and has a broad standard for eligibility. It does not exclude substance abusers or the mentally challenged. Staff is seeking out special materials and techniques for working with mentally challenged learners. It also does not exclude learners with diplomas or GEDs who want to reconnect with learning.

- Project Step-by-Step has developed several effective "arms" for this initiative, each entailing a different site, a different population and a different kind of partnership. CAI's Employment Training Director, who coordinates the project, has been particular flexible and committed to working out service options that are satisfactory for all the different "players." For example, it started out transporting learners from Salisbury to the Amesbury class, 15 minutes away. Because of the many problems with this, a Salisbury class will be starting soon. The program also transports learners from Amesbury to Haverhill several times each week so that they can study writing and work with computers there.

- The Amesbury program operates in a church hall 8/10 of a mile from the shelter. This is close enough that most participants can walk; but it is far enough that guests have an opportunity to get away from the shelter and to "shift gears" before they come to class. It gives them a reason to get up, dressed and out in the morning.

- Staff at CAI's community office in Amesbury are working to find ways to make this educational service available to the people they work with, who are usually in crisis. They have worked internally with caseworker and other staff to raise their awareness of this program and what it can offer clients. They are exploring a variety of outreach strategies: fliers, postcards, follow-up visits. This corresponds to the office's desire to have more that short-term, emergency contacts with clients. They are very interested in helping the people they see to identify and deal with the the causes of their homelessness so they can avoid the same problems again.

- The Step-by-Step teacher and administrator meet monthly at THWC with staff there. They use this time to discuss programmatic issues and concerns with individual learners. Partners are comfortable with each other that they can bring up and work out problems, for example the need to communicate on attendance or to re-orient the curriculum. The Drop-In Center advocate and the Salisbury Program Director participate in CAI staff meetings. Step-by-Step's teacher is included in Drop-In Center staff meetings.

- CAI's Employment Training Director has put an enormous amount of time into making this initiative work, well beyond her official 5% administrative time. She isn't formally the program coordinator, but the grant doesn't provide enough funds to hire someone else. Shelter partners praised her efforts, and one stated that "among all the agencies I've collaborated with, I've never had some be so accommodating as she is." The ET Director seems very comfortable confronting and trying to solve problems as they come up.

- This program has an equally flexible and committed teacher who is "willing to try anything." She works to respond to the individual needs of learners with very different interests and skills levels. The teacher also has counseling credentials, and she relates well to all kinds of learners. She tries to uses relevant materials, for example using weights and measure to teach math to a learner who wants to be a cook. She has actively sought out ideas and information from other teachers working with homeless adults.

- Step-by-Step offers learners a high number of contact hours. It offers Amesbury learners 12 hours of classes each week and Haverhill learners 9-10 hours/week on-site at the Drop-In Center. CAI also makes its Career Center and vocational counselors available to program participants.

- CAI's regular teaching staff have been available to meet with the Step-by-Step teacher as needed. Several of them also teach writing and vocational classes in the program. Vocational workshops are offered on an in-kind basis using staff and resources from Haverhill Career Exploration Center. Travel costs are paid for teachers who move between different sites .

- Program staff recognize the value of group learning activities and are seeking ideas, approaches and materials for engaging participants in group learning. They are considering asking advocates or social workers to co-lead different kinds of group sessions (this might dovetail with the Drop-In Center's efforts to start support groups for guests with different kinds of problems). Staff also see the importance of finding new approaches to dealing with homeless issues and related problems in the classroom; they are particularly concerned with making teachers comfortable responding to a learner who brings up the fact that she has been battered or is a recovering addict. They would like to see the State initiative do training on "What do you say to a learner" in these situations.

- Step-by-Step has created comfortable learning environments at the two sites it was operating this Spring. Before each class, teachers put up posters and other materials that make a bingo hall or office feel like a classroom. Learning how to communicate with each other, how to be supportive, how to deal with someone very different from yourself, and how to see another person's point of view even when you disagree with them are an important "hidden curriculum" at this program. Teachers are always looking for ways to promote these kinds of "existence" skills. It is easier to create this kind of atmosphere at Amesbury, among young mothers, than it is at the Haverhill Drop In Center. Guests there are sometimes rough or abusive with each other.

  At the Amesbury site, students chat and joke with each other, but also attend seriously to their work. The women there are clearly comfortable with the program teacher and administrator. When the administrator asked to take their picture for a newsletter, they teased her: "only if we can take yours;" "only if we get a copy." The teacher also seems to have a comfortable rapport with learners at the Drop-In Center. When only one or two learners come-- as is usually the case-- she offers instruction and encouragement as needed, but gives them space to work on their own.

- Staff are determined to create a learning environment where learners can't fail. Learners at both sites get one-on-one attention and a lot of positive feedback. Teachers and administrators in this program believe that building trust and confidence between a teacher and a homeless learner is critical for program success. The teachers are happy that learners come to class or come back after an absence. For them, this is a sign of "success." They believe that for people going through difficult periods, just making it to class is an accomplishment that deserves praise.

- All three shelter programs do as much as they can to respond to homeless adults as whole people, bringing to this effort as many resources as they can marshall. In addition to shelter, meals and housing search, THWC offers individual and group therapy, intensive parenting training, AA, NA and Parents Anonymous as well as referrals to other services as needed. THWC will also work on college admissions and financial aid for interested and qualified guests. The Salisbury Shelter Project enrolls children in Head Start and parents in education and training, as it connects the whole family with permanent housing and any benefits for which they are eligible. The Drop-In Center offers meals, clothing, medical care, advocacy, help with legal problems, connection with benefits,and referrals to de-tox and other services.

- Step-by-Step Support offers excellent program support services. Transportation is provided to and from classes that are any distance from where learners live (they are not offered for the Amesbury site, where the class is only 8/10 mile from the shelter). Child and infant care is offered on-site at THWC. The number of participants is large enough now that the program is considering placing older children in outside daycare so that the childcare worker will be able to give infants enough attention.

- Participants may continue with the program after they leave the shelter., and one woman has done so. In most cases learners will be placed in housing nearby, so they will not need transportation. Daycare can be continued for those who are on welfare.

- The program has developed a very comprehensive 2-part intake form that serves several purposes. Part I gathers demographic data and information on learners' educational history that will be useful for program reporting and assessment. The section on "homeless category" is very comprehensive, and gives a clear message that not only shelter residents are eligible. This section and the one that follows it, on "contributing factors," offer an opening for program staff to at least identify some of the issues learners are confronting. The second part helps identify learner interests and goals and helps structure a discussion on expectations, barriers to goal achievement, and support services needed.

- Staff are continually reflecting on their experience with this program, assessing the effectiveness of various strategies for serving homeless learners. They also have a long-term research agenda for comparing urban and rural homeless learners, their needs and their experiences with this educational program.

- Staff working on Step-by-Step have a broad perspective on where this effort fits into the effort to work against homeless and to empower homeless people. In their view, not only do homeless individuals need skills to gain long-term employment, but they also need skills to deal with the various agencies they're involved with and to fight back against trends and policies that hurt them, like gentrification, de-institutionalization and cutbacks in housing vouchers. These advocacy and organizing skills will help them in the future to be able to have an impact in their communities, or even to manage public housing systems they may be placed in.

## Tensions and Concerns

- The program finds it hard to offer cost-effective educational services at the Drop-In Center. In the program's first three months, five or six Center guests enrolled, but only one of them attended with any regularity. It is very difficult to do follow-up with Drop In Center learners. Learners from Salisbury have also not attended very much; none has met the 12-hour threshold for enrollment. The van ride to Amesbury seemed to be a big barrier for some learners; with only one van available, it sometimes took an hour to go around and pick up learners and their children at home-- to make a 15 minute trip. It also seems to require a "mental shift" for guests to leave one town and travel to another. The fact that the Salisbury program operates on a seasonal basis and was winding down just as Step-by-Step geared up also limited the education initiative's impact.

- The newest program arm, its effort to do outreach through CAI's Amesbury office, confronts a number of obstacles. Caseworkers in that office see people for short-term contacts, usually when they are in crisis. There are few resources to provide ongoing contact or advocacy, which seems to be critical for re-connecting homeless individuals with education opportunities. It is hard even to keep in touch with this group, since many are moving from place to place staying with relatives and friends, and others don't have phones.

- "Dry" shelters are hesitant to send their guests to attend classes at the Drop-In Center, which is "wet" (doesn't require that guests be sober or drug-free).

- Step-by-Step has not yet developed the capacity to serve ESL students, and options for referring them to other local programs are very limited.

- The current grant does not provide enough resources to carry out the scope of activities this initiative has mapped out for itself. Step-by-Step has no staff person whose job it is to coordinate; the Et Director assumes many of these responsibilities and the teacher assumes others. The gap is especially glaring in this very ambitious program, whose three different sites and four different "arms" make it complex and coordination-intensive. The Salisbury component "went beyond our ability to coordinate." The program seems to operate more like a series of separate partnerships, which also increases the coordination work load. It also doesn't appear to build in a lot of opportunities for the different program arms to come together and interact as partners, perhaps even involving others in the Shelter Network. Finally, the proposal format and State requirements add a lot of work, considering the small amount of funding this grant provides.

- The towns this initiative is attempting to serve (Haverhill, Amesbury and Salisbury) lie some distance apart and lack public transport. As a result, this program has had to develop more sites and worry more about coordination and transportation than it would in a more urban area. Transportation is both a financial and a logistical burden on the program. THWC would also like to see transport or funding for it made available to its participants, who walk 8/10 of a mile to class. This has been a hardship for a few, such as a woman who is pregnant with twins.

- At the one site with a consistent group of learners., the program has so far not systematically integrated group activities or peer learning into classes. Some of the topics that might facilitate group interaction and discussion-- writing, social studies, pre-employment-- are scheduled more sporadically and with only a portion of the class. Life Skills instruction has also dropped out of the curriculum, due to lack of personnel and the fact that some topic areas duplicate work that the shelters are doing (particularly THWC). Some learners have also expressed reluctance to spend time of activities they don't see as directly relevant to the GED.

- Staff's efforts to keep reconfiguring the curriculum to correspond with learner interest and the demands of operating three learning sites may make the experience somewhat disjointed. The four times/week vocational counseling has dropped down to two, and two writing sessions have been added. Teacher have also been shifted. The teacher has noted that the women students seem particularly bothered by discontinuity.

- THWC and Salisbury both require that guests be in full-time education or training programs four days/week. This mandate (which in part reflects DPW funding requirements) creates tensions for a program that prefers to be voluntary and responsive. For some guests, going to class may feel like a punishment. It also complicates transition. Participants do not have the option of taking a "break" from the program when they leave the shelter for permanent housing. Because the program's childcare is partly paid by DPW, they will lose their childcare benefits If they attend less than four days/week.

- The TWHC Director believes that there should be more interaction between shelter staff and the Step-by-Step teacher to keep her updated on the shelter's goals and treatment plan for guests. She tends to focus attention on the teacher's understanding and role, rather than on program structure and any inherent contradictions. THWC's director believes that the teacher needs to know more about learners' history and problems so that she can set appropriate limits and not let them abuse her or the program. (The Director feels that this has happened in several cases). She suggested a face-to-face meeting between staff and the teacher at the time of a guest goes into the program, and more regular meetings thereafter.

  The teacher sees this issue slightly differently. She doesn't feel that she needs to know everything about a person, all that they're dealing with: "no matter where they're coming from, I feel I can offer them something. I'm a resource, not a rescuer." The teacher feels it is important for her to understand shelter goals for learners. She believes that teacher and student goals should support shelter ideas, and any differences can be mutually settled. She feels comfortable with the approach the Drop-In Center Advocate has taken: providing her with"basic information" about a person and "leaving it at that." She isn't bothered by the fact that "THWC's reasons for sending students are different than my reasons for being glad they're here."

- CAI would like to see some expansion of ownership for this program to the shelter partners, through shifts in the staffing, funding or decision-making patterns. At the time of the site visit, they believed that the shelters-- and THWC in particular-- saw this as CAI's program for THWC's guests

# II. Program Design and Implementation

## Education Services

- Scheduling and Type of Learning Activities

At the time of the site visit, classes were offered at the following times:

Amesbury: 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. Monday, Wednesday and Friday.
9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. Tuesday and Thursday guests are transported by van to CAI Haverhill for writing or pre-employment classes. Participants could also practice on office equipment or see vocational counselors at CAI during these periods.

Haverhill Drop-In Center: 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Salisbury: During the spring, learners from Salisbury were transported to the Amesbury site. Step-by-Step was planning to begin offering classes in Salisbury one dayeach week during the summer.

The program operates year-round. It offers open entry/open exit services. It can also connect learners with Community Action's counselors, training programs and other services. CAI will soon have the capacity to connect homeless learners with special employment and training options funded through a second McKinney grant..

- Eligibility, Recruitment and Intake

### Eligibility

This project is trying to cast a wide net and offer services to virtually all homeless people living in Haverhill, Amesbury and Salisbury. All guests of the CAI Drop-In Shelter in Haverhill, residents of THWC shelter in Amesbury and clients of the Salisbury Homeless Project are eligible to participate. The Drop-In Shelter has no eligibility criteria-- it even serves active substance abusers. The other programs have relatively few eligibility criteria; they primarily look for a commitment to work with the program.

In addition, Step-by-Step has begun doing outreach in Amesbury among CAI clients and a broad range of groups likely to need their services. Their fliers speak to people who live on the street, in a rooming house, with another household or in a motel/shelter.

The program is handicapped accessible, and is prepared to serve mentally challenged individuals. It will serve guests at any skill level, from low literacy to those who have diplomas, GEDs and even some college.

### Recruitment and Intake

Project Step-by-Step has developed fliers that are posted at the Drop-In Shelter and the other two local overnight shelters, in CAI's offices, at the welfare department and in other locations where homeless individuals are likely to see them. One Advocate reported that "word is out on the street that this is an OK program, that people will be treated right here." The teacher and program administrator also offer a familiar presence at THWC and the Drop-In Center.

The Advocate, THWC staff, Salisbury Project outreach workers and Amesbury caseworkers also try to identify clients who might be interested in the program and to speak with them about it. Guests at THWC and the Salisbury project are required to be in an education or training program full-time and given their feelings and the very demanding nature of most employment training programs, this is the first step for most of them. For guests or clients who are interested in enrolling , staff complete the first of the two intake procedures, which focuses on demographic information. The teacher meets with that guest either immediately (at the Drop-In Center), or at the next possible class. The teacher completes the second intake form with the guest. This form offers an opportunity to open a dialogue about issues that are critical for "learner-centered" education: a learner's past experience with education and her feeling about that; her interests and goals; her employment history and interests; and any barriers she foresees to achieving these goals.

In most cases, the teacher and student then develop an "Educational Services Contract" specifying activities and goals the student will be working on, and the period for which they will be working. This contract will be used for assessing progress and revising goals.

- Enrollment and Retention

This program began operation on February 22nd, and in its first month it had served 13 learners, 7 of whom had completed at least 12 hours. By June, it was serving 6 of 10 guests at THWC, as well one regular Drop-In Center learner and 5 or 6 occasional ones. Most learners had dropped out of high school and had reading levels at the 6th - 8th grade level; one had a 4th grade reading level and some learning disabilities. One learner had partially completed a GED and another sought refresher courses before entering the community college.

Step-by-Step has good retention at the Amesbury site: no one there has left the program, and one woman who moved out of the shelter has continued classes. Retention for Salisbury learners transported to the Amesbury site was very poor: only one of them attained 12 hours. Slow transportation and having to leave home appear to have been barriers to participation for Salisbury learners. Retention is a "moot point" at the Haverhill Drop-In Shelter. Staff believe that the program's purpose there is to be available for when guests are prepared to look toward education. They don't expect that, given who these guests are, many of them will attend regularly.

The program has served all women and one man in Amesbury, and all men in Haverhill. One African-American and one Latina student have been enrolled; the other students have been are white (this reflects the fact that most homeless individuals and families in this region are white). Most students are between the ages of 18 and 35.

- Learning Activities, Curriculum and Learning Environment

**Learning Activities and Curriculum**

Step-by-Step offers primarily one-on-one instruction in a group setting. Pre-employment and writing classes do use some group activities, and the program as a whole is seeking to integrate more of them. Step-by-Step is prepared to offer instruction to help a learner meet any identified educational goal: learning to budget, learning cooking measurements, getting a GED, refreshing math skills. Math skills are a big request among the women in the Amesbury class, and three mornings each week are devoted to math and science. They began working on fractions together, and each learner soon moved on from there at her own pace. The teacher draws on CAI's curriculum, which teaches basic operations through relevant "Life Skills" activities like banking and price comparison. (CAI's curriculum is described more fully in the introductory "History and Context" section of this report.) She copies materials from a variety of texts and workbooks. Learners at both sites who are very focused on the GED work from the preparation book.

The primary Step-by-Step teacher has developed a module on reading to children, which is described above under "Strengths." Pre-employment and writing curriculum also take a skills-based approach; these are described more fully above.

### Learning Environment

At all its sites, Project Step-by-Step teachers create a relaxed and supportive learning environment where homeless students "can't fail." They offer learners a lot of individualized attention and feedback. This is described in more detail above, under "Strengths." One notable feature of the Amesbury site is that it is specifically for homeless learners, but it is outside of the shelter. Participation is mandatory for most learners at this site, and having a some time travel between each day helps guests from bringing problems and resentment from the shelter into the classroom.

Both sites also work on social "survival skills" like resolving conflicts and seeing another person's perspective. As discussed, this works well at Amesbury but not at the Drop-In Center.

This has created some peer support, but peer learning and tutoring are very limited at both sites. At Haverhill, there is often only one learner; but at Amesbury there are opportunities for more peer learning.

- Student Assessment

On intake, most students take the Brigance (red) test to determine reading and math skills level. CAI's math predictor test is used. In cases where the student seems to be nervous or intimidated, the instructor does a more informal assessment of his or her skills. Participants who are focused on the GED are given predictor tests in the different subject areas.

Project Step-by-Step considers learners and teachers to be "partners in educational progress." Ongoing assessment is based on the student's personal goals and the terms of the initial contract between instructor and students; no formal tests are administered other than GED predictors.

- Teacher and Tutor Selection, Training and Support

**Teacher Selection**

Teachers in this program are selected for their flexibility, interpersonal skills and ability to relate to different kinds of people, as well as their formal credentials. The program administrator added that she tends to look for people who "wouldn't feel uncomfortable when students tell him or her their problems, and who has some kind of counseling skills." She tends not to hire people without previous experience with adult learners. Teachers also need to feel comfortable working with classes of very mixed skill levels. Step-by-Step's primary teacher has experience as a teacher with various age groups, and as a teacher educator. She is also a trained counselor. Administrators and shelter staff praised her commitment, enthusiasm and caring nature; learners and staff feel very comfortable with her. She works 30 hours per week, including paid preparation time. The writing and pre-employment teachers are regular CAI staff, and they have extensive experience working with the disadvantaged adults the agency serves. If the program expands to include a Salisbury site as planned, it will need to hire another teacher.

This program doesn't have a formal system for using tutors. At the time of the visit, the teacher had identified one experienced teacher to work with her during class at the Amesbury site. She expected that the tutor would work with low-level learners, under her direction. Several parishioners at the church where classes are held have expressed interest in tutoring with the program. The teacher plans to offer tutors each an orientation to the program.

**Teacher Training and Support**

The program teacher got an informal orientation from the program administrator, from shelter and Drop-In center staff, and from CAI's regular teachers. She also familiarized herself with a lot of written information on homeless adults and their concerns. The Drop-In Center advocate and the CAI head teachers were particularly helpful to her. She meets with them regularly, and knows they are there as ongoing resources. Step-by-Step's teacher is also very involved with several staff development networks. She meets with other teachers in homeless education programs, and has been involved with them in developing a manual. She also attends training for both teachers and counselor that is offered by the State SABES initiative.

- Outcomes

In only four months, Project Step-by-Step had achieved a variety of successes. The most obvious ones include a GED and a transition to college. One participant had come into the program with a partially completed GED, and he was able to finish it. Another woman was working on math skills for entering the community college. She continued with the program even after leaving the shelter.

And both education and shelter staff identified a whole range of more subtle, but equally valuable, successes. THWC's Director stated that it was a big accomplishment for the program to have gotten her guests excited about learning. They are beginning to hope, to see some opening for themselves. She praised the Step-by-Step teacher and staff for being there to interact with the guests in a very positive way, for making it easy for them to feel a sense of accomplishment and hard for them to fail.

The Drop-In Center Advocate and social worker applauded the fact that guest keep coming back to this program, even if not regularly. One participant came right back to class when he got out of a month in rehab. It offers them "something to belong to when they have nothing and nobody." This can offer hope and incentive. In addition, the small successes guests achieve in the classroom can make it easier for them to feel capable of facing much tougher challenges, like staying clean. In the Center Staff's view, it is very important for the teacher simply to be there to spend time with guests when they are ready. But they credit the teacher with much more than tenacity. She has built trusting and accepting relationships with guests, most of whom are very alienated.

The teacher herself sees the fact that students keep coming back as a major accomplishment. She understands that it's hard for someone who's going through a really difficult time even to get up and out, much less be eager to learn. She is also happy with the comfortable classroom environment at Amesbury and the way guests have been working out any problems that come up between them. In her view, the program has succeeded in offering guests a positive learning experience and study skills that can help them "leap the gap" to further education.

## Program Organization

- Partnership

Step-by-Step is more a configuration of satellite programs with different provides, populations and sites than it is a "partnership." The CAI Employment Training Director and teacher are at the hub of this configuration, and her efforts are largely responsible for making it work. Three of the arms of this configuration-- the Haverhill Drop-In Center, the Amesbury Community Office, and the Salisbury Shelter Project-- are CAI projects. They are unified by the agency's common philosophy and orientation to delivering services, and have not had to go through the same process of learning-to-communicate that most partnerships entail.

All the arms of Project Step-by-Step report that they are happy with the way the partnership has developed. The one "outside" partner described it as a process of opening up: starting out polite and learning how to get issues aired and addressed. She feel that CAI's ET Director understands her agency and its constraints very well. On her part, the ET Director felt that the partnership with THWC had really developed and that communication was now relatively free and clear. She did believe, however, that it was important to find ways of involving THWC more in program planning and ownership-- perhaps by including some staff funding in the next proposal. She felt that this would make it more a partnership, less a Community Action program serving THWC guest

- Coordination and Management

The Community Action ET Director does most of the coordinating and administration for this initiative, since the grant does not provide enough funding to hire teachers and a program coordinator. She meets with the THWC Director monthly, and as often as possible with the Drop-In Center Advocate, the Amesbury Casework and the Salisbury Program Director. (They all work for the same agency and meet regularly at CAI staff meetings.) The teacher also participates in many of these meetings. The ET director also manages the budget, completes reports and acts as liaison with the State funding agency.

The program teacher provides much of the day-to-day coordination that allows this program to function well. She gets and shares with shelter staff information for intake and follow-up. She also discusses with them any problems that come up.

- Support Services

As discussed above, Project Step-by-Step offers excellent support services for learners. These complement regular services and supports that the THWC, the Drop-In Center, the Salisbury Project and CAI Amesbury provide to their guests and clients.

### Daycare

The daycare arrangements for this program have worked very well. Guests are very comfortable leaving their children with the childcare worker who comes into THWC during the times they attend class. Because the program has grown large (6 women enrolled) and many of the children are infants, Step-by-Step is looking for ways to reduce the load on the childcare worker. They anticipate placing older children in outside daycare programs. The program chose to hire a childcare worker rather than pay a guest to do it.

Childcare for both Amesbury and Salisbury participants is funded partially by the McKinney grant and partially by the Department of Public Welfare (DPW). This does make childcare contingent on attendance.

### Transportation

The program does its best to provide transportation to facilitate participants' access. This is a real challenge, because it serves three towns which are not well connected by public transportation systems. Step-by-Step transports Amesbury learners to classes at CAI Haverhill twice a week. In the Spring, it also transported Salisbury learners to the Amesbury site (in the future, classes will probably be offered in Salisbury). This was particularly difficult because guests had to be picked up by the childcare van, and it often took an hour for them to travel the 15 minute distance to and from Amesbury. The program has not yet had to deal with transportation issue for guests leaving the shelter, since THWC guests have gotten housing in Amesbury near the program.

### Counseling, Pre-Employment and Career Referrals

Project Step-by-Step offers participants vocational counseling and pre-employment workshops as an in-kind service, using CAI staff. Homeless learners may also use the Career Exploration and Education Center. As discussed above, learners may move from this program to occupational training programs at CAI. More bridges to training and employment will be available when CAI's second McKinney grant goes into operation.

- Incentives and Barriers to Participation

**Incentives**

This program offers homeless adults access to self-paced, individualized learning that can lead to further education, occupational training or jobs. The program elicits and respects learner goals and attempts to teach basic skills through relevant "Life Skills" applications. It creates a learning environment where participants "can't fail," and where they get a lot of positive feedback on even small accomplishments. Project Step-by-Step provides support services such as transportation and daycare that will make education truly accessible for homeless learners in three towns, many of whom have children.

**Barriers**

As barriers to participation are identified, this program tries immediately to address them. When distance and time-consuming transport made it difficult for Salisbury participants to attend, the program began seeking ways to develop a Salisbury site. Childcare may at some point be a barrier for guests who have left this shelter. Because the on-site childcare is partially funded by DPW, learners must be in class four days/week to be eligible to use it.

The real "barriers" homeless adults face are those that the program can only acknowledge, but not address. Particularly at the Drop-In Center, guests have drug, alcohol and other problems that make it hard for them to see education as a realistic option for taking them somewhere.

- Transition and Follow-Up

This program offers guests many options and resources for transition. Guests can move from this program into CAI or other training programs, or into jobs that the CAI counselors have helped them identify and get. Counselors will also help interested learner with college admissions and financing (THWC will also do this).

Transition and follow-up are very different issues for different arms of this program. In its first three months, the Amesbury/THWC program did not have to confront transition and follow-up very much. Only one guest moved into permanent housing, which was within walking distance of the class. She continued to attend this program, and will enter the community college in September. One identifiable transition issue, daycare, has been discussed above. Having childcare tied to mandated attendance makes it impossible to offer participants a "break" or hiatus to get settled into their new homes. THWC is already very good at transition: it identifies itself as a "transitional" program for women in recovery from a variety of problems and crises. The shelter has an established follow-up plan; it maintains contact with former guests for up to a year after they move into permanent housing. They already do follow up on education, training and job placement, which are all very important parts of THWC's transitional program. THWC works hard during the year that guests stay there to connect them with a variety of community resources: counselors, AA, NA, Parents Anonymous.

At the Haverhill Drop-In Center and the Amesbury CAI office, lack of capacity to follow clients is a major obstacle to offering them comprehensive services. Their strategy for combatting this gap is two-fold: getting information and fliers out so that homeless people will know about the program; and being available to offer supportive, unpressured contacts when clients do come in to access services. Both sites are also considering setting ongoing support groups as another channel for clients, and one where they could support each other.

- Program Assessment

In its early months, the program used "trial and error" to assess what it was doing right and what wasn't working. They have very open communication with shelter providers in each arm of the partnership; this offers a kind of on-going assessment. This channel helps Step-by-Step in solving problems as they come up and to think ahead; it reduces the need for rules, regulations and policies.

- Expansion and Innovation

**Expansion**

This program has already expanded from its original-- and very ambitious-- plan to offer services to Haverhill, Amesbury and Salisbury residents at two separate sites. It has worked with CAI Amesbury to develop outreach to their homeless and sometimes-homeless clients. It has also tried to involve a Haverhill night shelter, and will keep working on this. In view of the problems with transporting Salisbury residents to Haverhill, Step-by-Step is planning to open a third site there this Summer. To do this, it will need to hire another teacher.

**Innovation**

Step-by-Step is always looking for new methods and techniques to engage its learners. The teacher and administrator are particularly interested in developing group activities. They are considering drawing the shelter advocates and the displaced homemaker advocate to help facilitate group activities. The program is also considering "peer support" approaches for reaching and maintaining contact with CAI Amesbury homeless clients and Drop-In Center guests. Finally, CAI's second McKinney grant, which gives them over $300,000 to provide employment training for 200 homeless individuals in three towns, will offer many opportunities for joint activities and bridging.

## III. Recommendations

- Program Coordination: Step-by-Step has taken on an enormous and far-flung mission, and one that requires a great deal of coordination. The State funding agency should consider assisting CAI with funding for a coordinator-- perhaps someone with partial funding through the second McKinney grant.

- Expansion of Group Learning Activities and Relevant Materials: Step-by-Step should continue its effort to add group learning activities to its curriculum and to develop materials that address "real life" concerns homeless learners face.

- Drop-In Center Enrollment: Given the difficulties Project Step-by-Step has had in offering cost-effective educational services to guests at the Haverhill Drop-In Center, partners might wish to look into the possibility of offering guaranteed beds at on of the overnight shelters, or some other guaranteed service, to enrolled guests. Several other programs have found that this helps with retention.

- Partnership Development: This program might consider how it can open communication channels between service providers participating in various "arms" of the program. This may increase ownership. It may also offer a vehicle for addressing program goals and policy in problematic areas.

- Mandated Attendance: Project Step-by-Step should consider how to address the contradictions that arise when participation in an adult education program, and particularly one with a "learner-centered" focus, is mandated.

**Evaluation Conducted by:** Mary Jo Connelly

**Date of the Site Visit:** June 6 and June 7, 1990

# CATHOLIC CHARITIES OF WORCESTER/YOUVILLE HOUSE

# STATISTICAL PROFILE

*"I think you should please help us to keep this program together, and with more things to learn with. Thank you very much."*

Demographics: N = 7

All of those interviewed in the Catholic Charities program were females with children. The majority (85.7%) were between the ages of 21 - 35. Eighty-five and seven-tenths percent of those interviewed were Hispanic and 14.3% were white; the majority of those interviewed indicated that Spanish was the language they most frequently spoke. Over half of the learners were single. Over half of the learners interviewed indicated that they had lived in the U.S. over 10 years; and over half of the respondents have lived in Massachusetts five years or longer.

Over half of the respondents indicated that they had slept in their own apartment the past six months. Twenty-eight percent reported that they had slept in shelters. Currently, 71.4% indicated that they were living in their own apartment. The remaining reported living in shelters and/or on the streets. Twenty-eight and six-tenths percent reported that this was their first use of a shelter. The most frequent responses to why they left their last permanent home were: family problems, financial reasons, and eviction.

All of those surveyed indicated that public assistance was their main source of income. Seventy-one and four-tenths percent indicated that they receive AFDC. None of the respondents received WIC, 57.1% were receiving medicaid and food stamps. Fourteen and three-tenths percent were receiving SSI. The majority of those surveyed had worked in the past, and over half were currently looking for employment and desired assistance in looking.

Education

All of the respondents had completed 8 grades of school with the majority completing 10 or more grades. Twenty-eight and six-tenths percent had completed 12 grades. The majority had never been in an adult education program before. The majority had been in the program 4 weeks or longer; 14.3% of the learners had been in the program 12 weeks or longer. All of the learners indicated that this was their first time in the program, and the majority indicated that they found out about the program from a shelter counselor.

Learners indicated that their main reasons for enrolling in the program were: to get a GED; to write better; to get a job; to better myself in general; and because someone encouraged me. The overwhelming majority indicated that they were studying for the GED. Eighty-five and seven-tenths percent indicated that the program was giving them what they expected and that they expected to improve in areas to get their GED.

Less than half of the learners surveyed felt that there was something about the program that they would like to change. Some of the learners indicated that they would like professional daycare, and equipment such as typewriters and computers. Other changes recommended were night classes, and "everyone working on the same task." The majority indicated that there was something about the program they liked. The most frequent responses were: the teacher; the teacher speaking my native language; and the people. The majority indicated that they feel they have changed. The most frequent indicators of change were: more self confidence; excited and want to learn more; and meeting my educational goals.

Seventy-one and four-tenths percent indicated that they like having the classes as part of the shelter but that it was hard to come to the program sometimes. The most frequent reasons were; other appointment, transportation was difficult, and do not want to leave kids. The overwhelming majority indicated that they would like to continue taking classes after they leave the shelter and that support from teachers, transportation, support from friends, and good daycare would help them to continue. Learners surveyed indicated that they would like to continue in GED classes, job training, and tutoring. Over half of those interviewed indicated that education was very important to them when compared to other services they needed.

# PROGRAM PROFILE

NOTE: The Catholic Charities of Worcester Profile is different from the eight others in that none of the administrative level staff were interviewed. The Catholic Charities Literacy Coordinator, who oversees the program, was recovering from a car accident, and. The Shelter Executive Director and Director were not available either. The profile includes information from discussions with the teacher, three shelter staff (residential counselors who provide child care), a tutor and several students.

## I. Program Summary

### Program History and Context

Catholic Charities of Worcester, Inc. (CCW), an agency with extensive experience providing adult education and homeless services, initiated the Homeless Literacy Program in January 1990 with a McKinney Adult Education for the Homeless Grant. This program joins the efforts of two components operating within this one agency. Under the supervision of CCW's Commonwealth Literacy Corps coordinator, the Homeless Literacy Program offers Adult Basic Education (ABE), English as a Second Language (ESL) and General Equivalency Diploma (GED) preparation to residents of Catholic Charities Youville House family shelter. It also does outreach to and accepts referrals from other Worcester shelters. Under the management of a part-time teacher/coordinator, the Homeless Literacy Program offers participants 20 hours of classes per week, as well as "Family Story Hour" four times each week.

The program offers a student-directed approach to learning, which draws materials from real life problems and concerns. It offers a wide range of learning activities, including a number of innovations. Individuals and groups use budgeting, shopping and housing problems as well as daily journal writing to work on basic skills, GED prep and English. The class visits the library weekly, and also plays learning games like Global Pursuit, Scrabble and others once each week. The learning environment is open and supportive; building trust and supportive relationships is a critical part of this program's activities. The students and teacher comfortably discuss issues and problems in their lives and seek advice from each other. All participants have lunch together each day. They can also visit with their children, who are cared for on-site. Transportation to and from the class is provided for those who need it, including students who have left the shelter. In its first four months, the program enrolled 24 students of a projected 50 it will serve. During that period all students were women, and more than half were Latina.

- Catholic Charities of Worcester, Inc.

  The agency operating this program, Catholic Charities of Worcester, Inc. (CCW), serves refugees, immigrants seeking instruction in English as a Second Language, and adults who want to improve their reading and writing skills, as well as the City's homeless families and individuals. In 1989, it had an operating budget of $5.8 million, of which $4.5 million was raised through fees and grants and $1.3 million came in from contributions and other support.

  Catholic Charities has been providing services to refugees since 1978, when the influx of Southeast Asians into the Worcester area created a great need to offer assistance with survival, resettlement and acculturation. At that time, the agency began teaching English as a Second Language (ESL); it has also offered legalization assistance to counsel 250 undocumented aliens and to help them file necessary applications to gain residency status in US. It has followed this up with training in language, history and government to help these individuals gain citizenship. Since 1978, CCW has served refugees from many parts of the world: Southeast Asia, Russia, the Middle East, Eastern Europe and Latin America. It has delivered services to fulfill contracts with the State Departments of Social Services and Public Welfare, and with the Southern Worcester County Service Delivery Area.

In the past three years, Catholic Charities has broadened its services to include Adult Basic Education as well as ESL. Under the Commonwealth Literacy Corps, CCW has recruited and trained volunteers to work with area residents who have deficits in reading, writing and math skills. To date 120 volunteers have been tutoring 100 people individually, as well as assisting approximately 500 learners in 23 classes.

In 1983, Catholic Charities opened the first shelter for homeless families in the City of Worcester. Youville House-- the site of the Homeless Literacy Program-- has served over 2000 guests since it began, and its current operating budget is $500,000. The shelter will accept any homeless family; its only restriction is that it is a "dry" shelter-- that it does not accept drugs or alcohol, nor offer treatment for active substance abuse. Youville houses guests in a cluster of cottages; it also offers indoor and outdoor common spaces, a dining room and recreation facilities. Youville provides meals, shelter, housing search assistance and referrals to a wide range of benefits and services, including counseling. The major on-site programs the shelter offers are housing search, family life advocacy and the new education initiative. Staff include a Director, Counselors, and Family Life Advocates. Recent lay-offs of housing advocates have shifted responsibility for this effort to family life advocates. The shelter serves approximately 40 families each year. Guests stay at Youville an average of 90 days, although this stay was expected to grow longer since housing vouchers were discontinued in late spring.

Catholic Charities also operates two halfway houses: Ozanam House for deinstitutionalized mental patients; and Crozier House for recovering male alcoholics. Both programs offer counseling, treatment plans and other services to help guests get stabilized before they go back out on their own into the community. Catholic Charities has also collaborated with St. Paul's outreach and Pernet Family Health to provide homeless support services in Greater Worcester. This program, which was discontinued because of State fiscal cutbacks, provided food assistance, home visits, parent training and other services to former shelter residents.

- Local Context and Need

Catholic Charities is working to responding to the needs of the City of Worcester's growing homeless populations. Worcester has a very tight market job market, rising rents and a shortage of affordable housing. Worcester is also traditionally an immigrant city, and successive waves of immigrants from Southeast Asia, the Middle East, Russia, Eastern Europe, Latin America and Puerto Rico have increased the strain on limited housing, jobs and social services. Reductions in state and local budgets have translated into deep cuts in social services. Many shelters and transitional housing facilities have been established to serve Worcester's homeless. These include: three family shelters funded primarily by DPW; one large shelter for individuals funded primarily by DPW and the DPH Division of Alcoholism and Drug Rehab; and one women's shelter funded by private donations. Three transitional homes funded primarily by DSS serve teen parents (16-19 years), young mothers (20-24 years) and young families in transition. A network of shelter providers, the Worcester Shelter Directors' Coalition, has been established and meets regularly. A local Committee on Homelessness and Housing has also been established, which includes not only shelter providers but also area social services and other organizations concerned with this issue.

## Program Vision and Goals

- Vision

The Homeless Literacy Program reflects Catholic Charities' commitment to providing very respectful and comprehensive services to homeless families. Shelter staff at Youville set a caring and accepting tone; they create a sense of community among guests, and are attentive to the needs of both parents and children. They work to help families get restabilized and to gain a whole range of skills and resources they need to remain self-sufficient: housing, budgeting, parenting, counseling, jobs and education. Family life advocates work with mothers on everything from housing vouchers to assertiveness skills, while counselors play hide-and-seek and soccer with their children. In Catholic Charities' view, education contributes to this overall mission in two ways: it helps raise guests' sense of self- worth; and it offers them a chance to gain skills and information they will need to gain the jobs, training programs and further education needed to live independently.

Catholic Charities sought to develop a transitional program that would enable homeless adults to gain skills in reading, writing, math and English, as well as life skills. They envisaged a learning experience that would complement and support students' efforts to locate housing and gain skills for getting and keeping jobs. The program sought to serve ESL as well as ABE learners at all skill levels, including guests living in Youville House and other Worcester family shelters; it would continue to serve interested students after they had moved into their own homes. It would work with a total of 50 homeless learners in the program's first year by filling 20 slots at a time. Catholic Charities expected that guests would stay in the program for three months, on average. The Commonwealth Literacy Corps (CLC) coordinator assumed responsibility for staff training and support. The Residential Shelter Coordinator would assist the CLC Coordinator with staff orientation, oversee enrollment within Youville House and do outreach to other shelters in the provider's network.

The program's teacher/coordinator has broadened and deepened this vision for the Homeless Literacy Program, creating a supportive, participatory learning community where students and instructors can be who they are, and where they can work together towards their dreams. The feeling of community and participation starts at the door of the Youville Learning Center, which has the names of all 24 students splashed across it. The Learning Center is located in the Youville complex, in a building that houses the childcare center on the ground floor, with the classroom, a kitchen and several offices and meeting rooms upstairs. Students can visit their children downstairs during the lunch break: reading together in the "little people's library," playing together with some of the wide assortment of toys, rocking or cuddling on a sofa.

Inside the classroom, a series of student collages posted on one wall help visitors get acquainted with students' image of themselves and their futures. Signs and posters crystallize the program's message to students: "First Lesson: Believe in Yourself." Students are also reminded to write in their journals and read to their children each day. The teacher leaves them notes on a pad that says "Cherish your dreams." English and Spanish articles offer information on AIDS, homeless and current events. Cabinets hold a selection of reading materials including Alice Walker's novels, health and wellness booklets, popular magazines, textbooks and workbooks. Many names fill a book signout list. Students work together at long tables, going to the cabinets to help themselves to materials or to consult dictionaries, as needed. On the day of the site visit, several students came forward to greet visitors and to show them around. In this congenial women's space, the teacher, tutor, students, and visitors all interact comfortably over coffee cups, GED books, journals and math exercises.

- Program Goals

Learning Environment: Creating a learning environment where everyone can feel comfortable, accepted and knowledgeable is a very basic goal for the HLP teacher/coordinator. In her view, trust, good communication and an emotional connection are "what make the program work." Adult education has to "get personal" and be meaningful-- to address the problems students are confronting in their daily life, not only problems in a book. The teacher/ coordinator has worked to create a learning community where students, teacher and tutor interact as equals, and where students have many opportunities to learn from each other about everything from fractions to parenting. Although students are working on different topics and at different levels, instruction incorporates group activities and discussions. The teacher has also been very open with students about her own life and periods when she has faced problems similar to those they currently confront.

Learning Goals: The teacher/coordinator goal for student learning is broader than progress on academic skills. She hopes, first and foremost, that homeless learners will begin to see education as something accessible that can serve their needs, rather than something at which they have failed or for which they are not prepared. The teacher will do whatever she has to do to draw students into learning. In cases where guests' experience with traditional schooling makes them resistant to flexible and self-directed learning, the teacher will begin from something that looks more like school-- for example, a somewhat structured and teacher-directed geography unit. At the same time, she will build in choices and self-directed pieces, to help these students move in the direction of taking control over their own learning. The teacher encourages students to set their own goals and measure their own progress. She also uses games to engage students in group learning and to make it fun. In addition, she also connects students with community learning resources: they go to the library and have visited the community college.

Curriculum Development Goals: The Youville teacher/coordinator has strived to integrate academic and life skills, and to weave self-esteem work into all the program's learning experiences. She is continually working to develop and adapt varied learning activities (which are described in more detail below). Curriculum grows out of the problems and circumstances students are confronting, and the supportive relationships they are building in the classroom. The teacher "does a lot of listening to see what students are talking about to each other," and she includes some activities on those concerns. For example, if students are complaining about not being able to pay the bills, she do something on budgeting. As much as possible, reading, writing and math exercises incorporate materials on budgeting, housing, fuel assistance, banking and other practical concerns. The teacher/coordinator also makes opportunities to bring up other relevant issues: pamphlets on AIDS and other health and wellness issues, as well as articles on homelessness, are displayed in the classroom and included in the curriculum.

For all learning activities, the teacher tries to create experiences that will validate students' own knowledge and skills, as well as pass on new information. For example, she avoids formal classroom work on parenting, which in her view can be "very insulting. These students don't need someone telling them how to raise their kids, on top of everything else. Who am I to tell them? I'm not a perfect parent either." Instead of formal instruction, the Homeless Literacy Program builds in informal opportunities for parents to watch each other and shelter staff interact with their children. "Family Story Hour" is held four times a week, twice in the afternoons and twice at night. Students can also have lunch with their children and play with them after lunch. These all offer opportunities to exchanging information among parents and to solve problems.

## Distinguishing Characteristics

- Homeless Literacy Program (HLP) offers 20 hour/week of classroom learning, 6 hour/day, 4 days/week: Monday through Thursday 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. "Family Story Hour" is offered 4 times a week. Tutors are also available to work with learners in the evenings.

- This program's "partnership" brings together two components within one large agency which has extensive experience providing both adult education and services to homeless people. Catholic Charities of Worcester, Inc. has been working in refugee resettlement since 1978, and has offered ESL since that time. Since 1987, it has also operated a Commonwealth Literacy Corps tutor training program. In 1983, Catholic Charities opened its the first of three shelters and transitional programs serving homeless families, deinstitutionalized mental patients and recovering male alcoholics.

- In addition to serving residents of Catholic Charities Youville shelter, the Homeless Literacy Program also accepts referrals from other Worcester shelters (primarily family shelters).

- The Homeless Literacy Program has developed a brochure in English and Spanish that has been distributed to Worcester shelters, DPW offices and other sites where homeless residents will be likely to see it. Students in the program participated in developing and translating the brochure.

- The Teacher/Coordinator is the person primarily responsible for program management. She has a great deal of autonomy in curriculum development and learning activities.

- HLP serves more than 50% Latina learners, many of whom grew up in the U.S., and others who have recently arrived from Puerto Rico. Some Latina learners are bi-lingual, while others are working on English as a Second Language at various levels. The program makes Spanish books and novels available, and classroom posters are in Spanish and English. It does outreach to minority ethnic community organizations, neighborhood centers, churches and other gathering places to assure that this project will be known among minority populations.

- In its first four months, all HLP students have been female (male residents of Youville house over 16 are eligible for services). Most have been single heads of households.

- This program seeks to serve at least 50 individuals in a year. In its first four months, the program served 24 students.

- Every Thursday afternoon the class plays an educational game. They have used Scrabble, Global Pursuits and "Stump the Class," where students bring in their own questions.

- The teacher and all learners in this program have lunch together, and can spend time in the playroom with their children during the lunch breaks. The teacher emphasizes that this gives learners time together to compare notes and help each other solve problems. They learn from seeing how other mothers handle their children.

- The Homeless Literacy Program has organized "Family Story Hour" four times a week, some afternoons and some evenings (Monday at 12:00 p.m., Tuesday at 7:00 p.m., Wednesday at 3:00 p.m., and Thursday at 7:00 p.m.). Different staff members, volunteers and guests choose reading materials and do the reading; on different days, stories target different age groups of children. Parents are required to attend story hour with their children.

- The teacher and students go together once each week to the public library, where students select books for themselves and for their children. Each student has a library card. Signs encouraging students to read to their children are posted around the classroom.

- Students have a great deal of input into the management of the program, as well as the content of learning activities. Students developed rules and procedures for the childcare program; as a result, they feel comfortable leaving their children there. Students had input into the program brochure. On the day of the visit, several learners greeted visitors, took phone messages and otherwise took responsibility for helping the teacher make the class operate smoothly. At the few moments when discussion got too loud or students stayed "off task" for too long, a student usually stepped in to refocus her peers on their work.

## Program Strengths

- The HLP teacher has a very broad, accessible and student- directed concept of adult education: "Education shouldn't be a high-falutin' idea that's above people. Education has to be accessible and flexible, and it should respond to whatever people want to learn. We're working on a lot of different things here: basics, GED, ESL, college prep, life skills and more. My bottom line is that students learn something and feel good about it. That they measure what they're learning-- not me. I won't be the teacher who tells people what to do all day. This is new to a lot of people, and I have to ease them into it."

- As part of working to build students' self-esteem, the HLP teacher models willingness to take risks and not being afraid to make mistakes. She practices her imperfect Spanish with them and asks them to help use better grammar and vocabulary for getting her idea across-- reversing the role she is taking to help them learning English. The teacher feels it is really important that students know that learning is a continuous process: that there aren't some people who "know" and others who "don't know." A sign in the classroom reminds them of the "First Lesson: Believe in Yourself."

- At Youville House, education addresses real life concerns and builds solid relationships. Curriculum grows out of the problems and circumstances students are confronting, and the supportive relationships they are building in the classroom. From the teacher's perspective, "Students can't think of education as just problems in a book--it has to mean something. I can't forget that their other problems exist: we work them into the curriculum. Adult Ed. has to get personal. It has to build trust and intimacy. I create many opportunities where peer learning can take place: where we all can learn from each other's advice. Good communication and emotional connection are what make it work." Pamphlets on AIDS and other health and wellness issues are displayed in the classroom. Materials addressing budgeting, housing, fuel assistance, banking and other practical issues are included in learning activities. The teacher "does a lot of listening to see what students are talking about to each other." She tries to include some activities on those concerns For example, if students are complaining about not being able to pay the bills, she do something on budgeting.

- The HLP teacher often participates in Thursday morning shelter women's support group sessions. This gives her direct information about what other things guests are learning at the shelter, and allows her to hear what's on their mind in a different setting than the classroom. Sometimes resource people come in to address issues like health, nutrition, budgeting, career; but much of the time, guests use this as a support and discussion group. When she began working at Youville House, the teacher shared with this group her own history and some times when she had faced similar problems in her own life.

- The program has had good success in retaining learners after they leave the shelter for permanent housing. At the four month point, the majority of program participants were now living outside the shelter and were continuing with the program. Free support services continue to be provided for these learners. The shelter van picks up learners and their children at their homes (and at other shelters) and returns them there after class. These participants may continue to use on-site childcare and to have lunch at Youville House.

- The Homeless Literacy Program has good facilities for learning and childcare. While the classroom is small, it is well equipped and reserved for this program. A kitchen next to the classroom has another small table where a few learners can work. It also offers a place to have coffee or juice. There is also a typewriter and a xerox machine there. The childcare room is well equipped with toys and a jungle gym. There is a separate room for infants and a "little people's library," as well as an outside play yard and sandbox. The learning site is in the Youville House Complex, near guest residences. Students also know and trust the shelter staff who do transport and childcare.

- The HLP program integrated group and individual learning activities. The teacher/coordinator has set some goals for all learners, regardless of level: that each one read something every day ("it can be a magazine or a street sign); and that each one write in her journal. She has developed or adapted a variety of innovative group activities and exercises. These include:

    (1) Problem-solving math, where students learn basic math operations through real-life transactions. In the "Coke machine lesson" students made change to to buy sodas as they learned to change whole numbers to fractions. In other lessons, they figure percentages through exercises on budgeting, lay-aways, and comparison shopping for groceries.
    (2) A month-long geography unit where the students and teacher each chose a country they were interested in to research during library visits. They also prepared oral and written reports on that country.

(3) Lifeboat, a values clarification exercise, made students practice language and assertiveness skills to defend the right of their character– a doctor, teacher, therapist or pregnant teen-- to stay in a hypothetical lifeboat. Students played two rounds of the game, so they had a chance to act on what they'd learned.

- Educational, vocational, substance abuse or other psychological counseling are provided through shelter referrals to outside services.
- Students do journal writing in real journals bound in flowered cloth. For some students, this is the primary way they are working on their writing skills. It offers learners a "whole language" experience of working on grammar and punctuation through writing for self-expression. The teacher asks to look at journals periodically to identify grammar and other needs.
- Learners set short and long-term goals when they enter the program. Assessment is based on progress towards these goals rather than on formal testing. The teacher does not do intake testing because she believes that the grade level data they provide is meaningless for adult learners; she knows students' general ABE or ESL level. She pays attention instead to students' general comfort with what they are doing, and to how they feel about their own progress. The teacher uses this same kind of process to assess her own learning. She reflects on what she is learning through this program, what changes she sees in herself (e.g expressing herself better in Spanish), and what she still needs to learn (e.g. needing to learn to let go and not blame herself when problems that she can't control come up for students).
- This program addresses social issues like sexism and racism as they come up in students' discussion of their experiences. The teacher finds that students of all races identify with each other as mothers, and relate to each other in a supportive way. • This program strongly encourages peer learning and support. The teacher tries in many ways to create a "family" feeling. For example, in the first week of class each student (and the teacher) created a collage about herself and her interests, and explained it to the group. These collages are posted in the classroom. Every student's name is posted in big letters on the classroom door. In addition to whole group learning activities such as those described above, students are encouraged to work in groups of two or three on math, reading and ESL activities whenever possible. More and more peer tutoring goes on as women gain confidence in their own abilities.
- The Homeless Literacy Program will support students who want to go into training or employment, but they do not focus on pre- vocational preparation. The teacher has found that most students are interested in careers like counseling, teaching and human services, rather than the kinds of jobs they could get through short-term training. She believes that nearly all of them "have so much potential for going on to do wonderful things for people." The teacher has helped several students apply to be bi-lingual aids in the public schools. She took two others to visit the local community college. One of these students was accepted to the college, and asked to go with her to the financial aid office.
- The Catholic Charities Commonwealth Literacy Corps makes trained tutors available to the program both to help in the classroom and to provide individualized evening tutoring.
- Students feel very connected to Youville House and to this program. One spoke of it as her "second home." Another credited it with helping her learn assertiveness and other

things she needed to know "to take care of herself" so she didn't end up back in the shelter.

## Concerns and Tensions

- Childcare has been done by volunteers and shelter staff, which has serious limitations. The volunteers were wonderful, but both had to quit and get paying jobs. Shelter staff have been very supportive of the program, and students have appreciated their caring attention to the children. However, the shelter staff has undergone layoffs recently, and this puts a big extra load on them. It also puts a burden on the teacher and several students who feel responsible for making the childcare go smoothly. Regardless of how attentive they are, in the absence of one person who is consistently in charge of childcare, small mix-ups and problems occur that make everyone uneasy. As the teacher emphasized, "If we don't have decent childcare, we don't have a program." The program is seeking additional funding to hire one or two paid childcare workers to watch the up to 15 children who are often in childcare. It is possible that one childcare worker could have a dual role: tutoring or helping with transportation, depending on his or her background.

- The variety of coordinating responsibilities for which the HLP teacher is responsible take away from teaching, and she isn't on payroll for all the time it would take to do both. In addition to teaching, the teacher's responsibilities include: doing intake; referring learners for other services and programs, as well as sometimes accompanying them there; keeping records; developing materials and curricula; coordinating with childcare and transport, including providing rides home as often as she can; making sure that the shelter keeps in touch with learners who have moved out; and attending statewide network meetings.

- Although class attendance varies, with so many students enrolled there are often more students than one teacher can effectively work with, when a class contains so many different skills levels and different topics. The program does not have the resources to meet the whole range of students' learning interests, such as computers and typing.

- Although the Homeless Literacy Program has enrolled guests from a variety of Worcester shelters besides Youville House, it does not appear to have enrolled guests from either of its other two shelters, Ozanam and Crozier House. This would perhaps require some adaptation of the existing program, since each of these shelters serves homeless people with special concerns: deinstitutionalized mental patients and recovering male alcoholics. The existing education program serves primarily single mothers.

- DPW requirements requiring clients to be in accredited education programs have obliged one woman to leave the Youville class in order to take ESL programs at the Adult Learning Center, which is accredited but has no childcare. The teacher has succeeded in getting some ET workers to accept this program as an option for clients, even though it isn't accredited.

- Transportation is also a big load on shelter staff. They have to call all students each morning to check which ones are coming to class, then pick them up. Staff get upset when students later change their plans. Some of the same staff are responsible for transport and child care; and neither of these falls under their regular counseling and support duties.

# II. Program Design and Implementation

## Educational Services

- Schedule and Type of Learning Activities

Classes are held at Youville House Monday through Thursday 9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. Students receive 20 hours of instruction per week. Students work independently and in small groups on various ABE, ESL and GED topics. A variety of activities involving the entire class are also included. Classes meet year-round, with one week breaks scheduled in April and in July.

"Family Story Hour" is held four times each week: Monday at 12:00 p.m., Tuesday at 7:00 p.m., Wednesday at 3:00 p.m., and Thursday at 7:00 p.m.

Students who are residents of Youville House work after class and on Friday with the Family Life Advocate on Housing and other issues.

Tutors are available evenings to work with learners two to four hours/week.

- Eligibility, Recruitment and Intake

**Eligibility and Recruitment**

All residents of Youville House age 16 and over are eligible to participate in the Homeless Literacy Program, regardless of their skill or credential level. Youville is a shelter for homeless families; most guests are women and their children. The shelter does accept 2-parent families, although very few of them come in. It does not accept active substance abusers or people with serious mental illnesses. The classroom facility is not handicapped accessible.

The HLP program also accepts guests from other shelters, as well as homeless people who are living doubled up with friends and family. Catholic Charities Coordinator of Residential Services has shared information on the program with other shelter providers through the Worcester Shelter Directors' Coalition and Worcester Committee on Homelessness and Housing. Students in the HLP have had input into a brochure describing the program; the brochure is printed in both English and Spanish. It has been distributed at the Homeless Coalition and Committee; copies have also been left at welfare and other social services offices. Catholic Charities has also made special effort to disseminate information about this program among ethnic associations and community organizations, and at churches and neighborhood gathering spots.

Youville House guests are informed of this program at shelter intake, as part of the shelter's assessment of client needs. Shelter staff will take interested guests to the classroom to meet the teacher. Program information has also spread among guests by word of mouth. New guests can also see the teacher and students together at lunchtime. Referrals from other shelters go directly to the teacher ; those guests can then be picked up by the Youville van to come to class.

### Intake

The teacher/coordinator handles intake for this program, which is ongoing. She goes slowly with asking questions and gathering information, because she feel it is too intrusive to "ask a lot of personal kinds of questions when someone first comes into the the classroom." At this first contact, the teacher focuses on learning what the student wants to work on and at what general skill level. As she gets to know the student, the teacher completes an intake form with the following information: educational background, languages speak, learner long and short- term goals. She also notes the name of the student's Family Life Advocate, and her availability to attend classes.

The teacher/coordinator does not do intake testing. She does not believe that the "grade level" these tests assign offers useful information for adult learners. So long as it is not required by the grant, she will not do intake testing. Instruction is individualized and at the student's pace, and the class is mixed, so "levels" aren't particularly useful for grouping students.

- Enrollment and Retention

In its first four months, this program enrolled 24 participants, all of them women and all are single mothers. More than half of the students in this program are Latina: some of them have grown up in the U.S. and others have recently arrived from Puerto Rico. Most of the Latina students are looking for intermediate to advanced ESL and GED preparation, although more and more come in looking for beginning ESL. Two of the seven students who attended class on the day of the site visit were studying beginning ESL; four more were scheduled to begin classes the next day. The other students are working on intermediate math, reading and writing, as well as GED preparation.

At the four month point, only a minority of enrolled students were living in the shelter; the others had moved into their own homes. Enrolled shelter guests are expected by shelter staff to attend class regularly, although housing search takes a lot of their time. Many continue coming after leaving the shelter-- a few regularly, most sporadically. Attendance fluctuates from one student to a dozen at a time. One student moved back to Puerto Rico. No students had been "terminated" from the program; they were welcome to return at any time. Several students have brought friends and relatives into the program.

The program is very hospitable to retaining students. Students work at their own pace, towards goals they have identified. They get a lot of encouragement and positive feedback from both the teacher and other students. Learning activities are diverse and often fun. The atmosphere is comfortable, and students can spend time with other students and a teacher to whom they have grown close. They can bring their children, to leave them with childcare providers they know and trust. Students who live outside of Youville House can be transported to and from class in the shelter van.

- Learning Activities, Curriculum and Environment

### Learning Activities and Curriculum

As discussed above under Program Vision and Goals and Program Strengths, this program has developed an approach to educating homeless adults that emphasizes student control and empowerment. The teacher/coordinator includes a range of individual and group learning activities; she emphasizes, however, that activities must be flexible and student-directed. They must grow out of student interests, and must respond to a diverse and changing group of learners. She originally spent two weeks doing lesson plans for the class-- only to learn within two days that these wouldn't work. Her generally approach to a class is to get the group of two or more ESL students started, and then go work individually with ABE and GED learners. She has had several long-term tutors, who generally work with ESL students.

The teacher takes an interactive approach to planning group learning activities: she bases them on what she hears learners complaining about or discussing: budgeting, health issues, shopping, housing. Learners also identify and work towards their own goals. The teacher sets some goals for all learners. Each student is expected to read something every day in English (anything "from a magazine to a street sign"); and each is encouraged to write in her journal during each class. Students have regular journals, covered with flowered cloth. Journals provide a "whole language" experience for working on grammar, organization of ideas, punctuation and spelling through self- expression. The teacher asks to see the journals from time to time, to see what she can help with. Some students are working on writing "almost entirely" through the journals, and the teacher has seen enormous progress in their work. Others students don't do much with journals.

### ESL Curriculum and Activities

Catholic Charities generally uses a MELT (Mainstream English Language Training) curriculum that has been developed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and a special "English for Legalization" curriculum. These curricula are competency-based, and break learning activities out into specific Community and Job Competency Areas. The Homeless Literacy Program has these materials available, and uses the curriculum outline with her own materials. Instead, the teacher and tutors take a more whole language approach to ESL. They often start a lesson by asking students what kind of words they want to learn, or what kinds of activities they want to be able to conduct in English. Lessons are built around these specific student needs and interests. Students are asked to learn five new words a day; they often use picture dictionaries for this. On the day of the site visit, a tutor helped one ESL student write a letter to her mother. The tutor praised the letter, and instead of immediately correcting spelling or grammar, the tutor encouraged the student to analyze her own writing. She asked "What are your questions about the letter?"

### ABE Curriculum and Activities

Catholic Charities' ABE curriculum uses a modified whole language approach; like the ESL curriculum, it uses a variety of instructional material to address competencies in different Community and Job Areas. Once again, the HLP teacher/coordinator adapts this curriculum to meet individual learner needs and interests. She encourages students to pick out their own reading materials on weekly library trips. Other novels, magazines and pamphlets are available in the classroom. "Critical Thinking and Reading" and "Critical Thinking with Math" workbooks are available and students sometimes use them. Forms that students encounter in every day are also used for reading and writing instruction: rental and rental assistance applications, fuel assistance forms, documents for emergency assistance, fair housing laws, newspapers, job applications, banking forms and training program information.

For math instruction, the teacher prefers to use real life applications to teach basic operations. For example, the class made change for the soda machine to learn about changing whole numbers to fractions. They compare costs for quarts and gallons of milk. They work on percentages by figuring the cost of layaway payments for items of clothing at different prices. The teacher also does some exercises to try to reduce math anxiety.

Students working to prepare for the GED primarily work from the workbook. They also use journal writing and take part in library visits, weekly games and group learning activities.

### Other Learning Activities

The teacher/coordinator has also developed a range of innovative group learning activities that address academic and life skills at the same time. The teacher is particularly concerned to develop critical thinking skills and general knowledge of history and geography that will help students interpret current events. Innovative activities include the "Lifeboat" exercise and the geography unit described under "Program Strengths." Thursday afternoon educational games also fall in this category. Games that have worked well include Scrabble, Global Pursuits and "Stump the Class," where students bring in questions. (Trivial Pursuits didn't go over well). Teacher finds a book called Games Language People Play to be a useful resource.

Other learning activities include: weekly library visits where students pick out books for themselves and their children; and Family Story Hours held four times each week, where volunteers and students read children's books together (parents must accompany their children to story hour). This is sometimes referred to as the "intergenerational literacy component."

Class discussions also happen frequently, and they often address problems that students confront in their lives, including sexism and racism. The teacher stays away from in-depth discussions on serious personal issues like abuse; she encourages students to talk with counselors about these issues. Students are very supportive of each other, and help each other solve problems.

### Link to Employment

The HLP teacher/coordinator does not believe that it is particularly important to link education with employment, unless that corresponds with the student's interests and goals. She finds that most of them want careers in counseling, teaching and human services, rather than the kinds of jobs for which short-term training would prepare them. At the request of two students, she took them to the School Department to apply to be bi-lingual aids. She took two others to visit the community college, and one was accepted there.

### Learning Environment

One student described the Youville classroom as her "second home." This report has already described the many ways in which the teacher/coordinator works to create a comfortable, empowering learning environment where teacher, tutor and students can interact as equal participants. Students take an active part in creating this positive environment: helping and encouraging each other, keeping the group on track, answering the phone when the teacher is busy. Students take an active interests in each other's lives and progress. The whole class got very excited when a student called to say she'd been accepted to the community college.

- Student Evaluation

As described above under intake, this program's teacher/ coordinator does not believe in using formal tests for this program. The tests yield little information she finds useful for helping the student progress.

Instead, the teacher/coordinator assesses students' work based on how students themselves feel about their own progress, towards goals they have set.

The teacher is also very aware of her own learning and changes, as well as what she still needs to learn.

- Teacher/Tutor Selection, Orientation and Support

**Teacher Selection**

The Catholic Charities CLC coordinator hired the teacher/coordinator in February. The teacher/coordinator has taught teen parents before, so she was not "starting cold." She also had a degree in education and practice teaching in a school district where there was a lot of innovation. The teacher/coordinator feels very attuned to this program; for her, it "feels like giving back," since she was also in a difficult situation at one point in her life. Like most of the women in the program, she is also the mother of a young child. She is bilingual in Spanish and English.

The teacher was hired for 20 hours each week, but it soon became clear that there wasn't enough time, since she was expected to teach 20 hours. Five hours were added to her time. She also assumed all other duties listed in the job description:

(1) Assessing learners and developing education plans;
(2) Providing individual and group instruction to learners;
(3) Keeping records of learners' time and progress;
(4) Providing educational counseling, referrals and follow up activities with learners;
(5) Maintaining inventory of supplies and materials;
(6) Participating in the development of homeless curriculum;
(7) Participating in the development and implementation of the intergenerational literacy component; and
(8) Acting as liaison with Residential Counselor and CLC Coordinator to coordinate education and support services for learners.

Besides these, the teacher found that learners often wanted to stay and talk, and they ask her to accompany them to the community college or elsewhere. She also has to be concerned about childcare and transportation, with which frequent problems arise.

**Teacher Orientation and Support**

The teacher/coordinator met with the CLC Coordinator and Shelter Staff to get oriented to the shelters and the kinds of problems their guests are confronting. She can take part in staff development activities conducted by the CLC, the Homeless

Education network and the regional SABES initiative. The budget provides for travel to these meetings. The CLC Coordinator provides support and back up for the teacher/coordinator.

### Tutors and Tutor Training

The CLC Coordinator is responsible for providing qualified tutors to assist the teacher/coordinator in the classroom and to provide additional instruction to individual students. In the Homeless Literacy Program's first months, some tutors participated, but none had yet made a regular commitment to this program. A VISTA volunteer working with Catholic Charities CLC came most often, but still less than once a week. The teacher particularly wanted tutors to help with beginning ESL students, who need a lot of one-on-one instruction. Program tutors go through the CLC's usual training, which uses a modified whole language approach.

- Outcomes

The Homeless Literacy Program has created a setting where learners have taken a great deal of control of their own learning, and for the success of the learning community. Students had input into the program brochure, and they developed rules and procedures for childcare. Students have a high level of concern for each other, and many of them keep coming back after they leave the shelter.

Students' individual progress has been noticeable, as well. One woman who had been in the program for most of its four months reported that she "had started learning things I needed to learn, like assertiveness. Even writing and math. I learned to take care of myself, so I don't end up back here." The teacher also observed that this students had "come out of herself, become a much stronger and more confident person." This program has helped other students to make the transition to the community college, and the teacher believes that many students in this program "have the potential to go on to do wonderful things for people."

## Program Organization

- Partnership

As described under "Distinctive Characteristics," there is no partnership for this program. The grant brings together two components within one agency. The two administrators responsible for its implementation are the Commonwealth Literacy Corps (CLC) Coordinator and the Executive Director of Shelters. The Youville Shelter Director is also involved in some decisions. (None of these administrators were interviewed). These administrators do not meet regularly to discuss this program; they try to resolve problems as they arise.

The teacher reports that communication regarding the HLP program is relatively easy, given that the agency is small and operates on a shared philosophy. At the same time, the educational program has added daily childcare and transport duties for shelter staff whose other responsibilities are primarily counseling, case management and advocacy. It has put a particular drain on staff at a time when their number has been reduced through lay-offs. The teacher is very aware of how staff are feeling about these duties, when they are beginning to resent the extra burden. She does what she can to help out, for example taking students home so that staff members don't have to drive them.

- Coordination/Management

The CLC Coordinator assumes major administrative responsibility for the program, and oversees its operation. The McKinney grant funds 10% of her time. The teacher/coordinator praised the CLC Coordinator as the "best boss ever;" she has a high degree of trust in the teacher, and gives her a lot of autonomy. She also offers the teacher praise and acknowledgement for her efforts, and has served as back up teacher on occasion. The CLC Coordinator acts as a liaison with the Department of Education and handles reporting. When the CLC Coordinator was absent for a prolonged period due to injury, the Executive Director of Shelters has taken on these roles and has offered excellent support and back-up to the teacher/coordinator.

The Teacher/Coordinator is responsible for day-to-day program management, including enrollment, curriculum development and follow up. She works just over half time (25 hours/week), with no benefits. The teacher/coordinator bridges the components on a daily basis, as she communicates with counselors and other frontline shelter staff to do intake, and to work out logistics and problems. She often sits in on the shelter's weekly women's group, so she is informed about the shelter's other learning activities and knows what is on the minds of staff and guests. The teacher/ coordinator is very aware of how staff are feeling about the education program, and she tries to "manage" their burden in whatever way she can. At the same time, she herself is overtaxed, with the combination of teaching, coordination and logistic issues she must address.

As described above, students have had substantive input into organizing program childcare and into the brochure, and into learning activities.

- Support Services

Catholic Charities' Homeless Literacy Program has made a great effort to offer comprehensive support services to students, including on-site childcare, lunches, transportation and referrals to counseling. Some problems remain to be worked out in the childcare and transport.

### Childcare

For the program's first four months, volunteers and shelter staff provided childcare while mothers attend class. The program has identified the need for 1-2 paid childcare workers as its primary need. Without a person paid to oversee everything that happens, problems can and do occur. The students have developed childcare rules and procedures, but they should not have to worry about childcare while they are in class.

The childcare offered is of good quality, and by people guests trust. Childcare workers play games with children, do crafts with them, read to them, and take them to the park. Facilities are excellent: in addition to many toys, bright colors and comfortable furniture, there is also a "little people's library," a jungle gym and slide inside, as well as a sandbox outside. A separate Infant Room is equipped with mobiles, two cribs, a rocking chair, and a changing table. Mothers come down at the lunch break to spend time with their children.

### Meals

Youville House provides meals for its guests, and the HLP program funds lunches for the teacher and participants who are not Youville guests. Students and teachers eat together each today and help with setting up and cleaning up. This informal contact provides a time for participants to get to know each other, and to see how other mothers interact with their children.

### Transport

Youville's van transports guests who have moved into their own homes or who come from other shelters. The van holds up to 15 guests and children.

Communication does pose a problems for transport. The teacher gives shelter staff a list to pick up, and staff call each morning be sure students on the list are planning to come that day.

### Counseling and Referrals

The Teacher/Coordinator offers informal educational counseling, and refers students to school district and DPW services for more in-depth educational or vocational counseling. She has also referred students to local community colleges and business training programs.

Family life advocates offer Youville guests non-formal education in areas such as parenting instruction, nutrition and budget planning. They also do on-site counseling.

## • Incentives and Barriers to Participation

### Incentives

As this profile has discussed, the Catholic Charities program offers a supportive learning environment where any guest can work at her own pace on basic skills, English, math, writing or other skills. The HLP teacher/coordinator works to create a strong community of learners, and to respond to each learners concerns and interests. She integrates real life problems and materials into the curriculum, and uses a variety of innovative games and learning activities. The program's "intergenerational literacy" activities include Family Story Hours four times each week, as well as library trips.

The program offers childcare, transportation, lunches and other supports that make it possible for students to stay in the program. Finally, students can use this program as a bridge to other education and training programs if they wish to; the teacher has accompanied several students to the community college, and two were admitted.

### Barriers

There are relatively few barriers to participation in the HLP program. Funding limits teaching time and obliges the program to use volunteers and shelter staff for childcare and transport. DPW's accreditation and attendance requirements have posed a much bigger barrier for some students. One woman was forced to leave this program and enroll in an ESL program at the Adult Learning Center, which has no child care.

- Transition and Follow-Up

Students are encouraged to continue instruction after leaving the shelter; the teacher and shelter staff discuss each student's transition plans with her as she prepares to move out of the shelter. Transportation, childcare and lunches are provided for those students who continue. They also build relationships with other students while in the program that make it compelling to come back.

The teacher has found that most students continue to come back regularly once they have left the shelter. A few have continued sporadically. It is easier for some students to participate once they leave the shelter, since they don't have to work on housing search.

Shelter staff follow guests for up to a year after they leave the shelter.

- Program Assessment

No systematic program assessment has as yet been carried out.

- Expansion/Innovation of Services

The program expanded from its original plan to offer intermediate and advanced ESL; it began offering beginning ESL, as the need arose.

The program would like to expand the range of services for which it pays staff to include paid daycare and an additional teacher, at least part-time. The teacher/coordinator would like to be able also to offer typing and computer instruction. She would also like to have training and special materials for working with students who have learning disabilities.

## III. Recommendations

- Funding and Services Level: This program has does not appear to have adequate funds or resources for the scope of the work it has taken on. Funding should be provided for regular childcare staff, to take a load off the teacher, shelter staff and students.

- Teaching/Coordinating Load: The program should seek resources to provide the teacher coordinator with assistance (and/or more hours). With 24 enrolled students and a 20- hour/week class schedule, more than one instructor is needed– particularly in view of the current teacher's other coordinating and management duties. Regular tutors only partially solve this problem.

- Administrative-Level Coordination: Although it is unclear how much coordination goes on at the administrative level, it appears that regular meetings involving the teacher/coordinator, the CLC Coordinator, the shelter director and any other key staff involved could offer a forum for coordinating and problem-solving around issues that come up in the Homeless Literacy Program. A program Advisory Committee, such as the one described in the project proposal, might bring Catholic Charities staff together with staff from other shelters involved as well as students.

- State-Level Coordination to Seek DPW Accreditation: The State Coordinator should look into the issue of getting DPW accreditation for this and other Adult Education for the Homeless programs, as well as the general question of how DPW regulations for participation in education and training have an impact of the individuals this initiative serves.

- State Funding Agency Support: The State Department of Education should seek resources to help this program document and disseminate its very effective and innovative approach to adult education for the homeless, particularly its philosophy, learning activities, and curriculum.

# YEAR 2
# PROGRAMS

# PROJECT LIGHTHOUSE

## LONG ISLAND SHELTER/LITERACY VOLUNTEERS OF MASSACHUSETTS

# STATISTICAL PROFILE

*"I think the program is very informative and there should be more programs like this one for people who have a hard time learning, a program where there are other individuals around. I know I have enough potential to increase my educational and academic skills."*

Demographics: N = 9

The majority of the learners surveyed in the Literacy Volunteers/Long Island Shelter program were male (88.9%), over the age of 26, and Black. Sixty-six and seven-tenths percent of those interviewed were single and 22% reported being divorced. While the majority did have children, they did not have them with them. The overwhelming majority have lived in Massachusetts over 10 years.

The majority of learners surveyed reported that they had lived in shelters the past six months. Others reported that they had lived with family. Eighty-eight and nine-tenths percent indicated that they were currently living in a shelter; one person was living in transitional housing. The majority indicated that this was their first use of a shelter. When asked why they left their last permanent home, 66.7% reported they left due to family problems. The rest indicated that they left because of financial problems.

Over half of those surveyed indicated that public assistance was their main source of income, with learners receiving general relief, food stamps, and unemployment. Fifty-five and six-tenths percent indicated that they were working at least part-time. All of those surveyed had worked in the past and currently over half were looking for work and indicated that they would like assistance in looking for work.

Education

The majority of those surveyed had completed 11 grades of high school. One person had graduated and 22% had completed 8 grades. The majority indicated that they had not been in adult education previously. Eighty-eight and nine-tenths percent indicated that this was their first time in the program. Over half had been in the program four weeks or longer. Over half reported that at this time in their life they would not go to a center on their own had the program not been there. Eighty-eight and nine-tenths percent found out about the program through a shelter counselor.

Learner's who were surveyed indicated that they enrolled to get a GED; to better themselves; to get a job; to get a better job; and to read and to write better.

Eighty-eight and nine-tenths percent reported that the program was giving them what they expected. Learners reported that they expected a better view of education; to get a GED and better job; and to "learn more about myself" from the program. The majority indicated that they were studying reading and writing.

Those surveyed indicated they liked the one-to-one, small classroom and that they are with people who want to better themselves.

Only 33.3% indicated that there was something they wanted to change. Learners indicated that they would like to "speed it up," and have it in a "secluded area."

All of those surveyed indicated that they felt they changed. The majority of learners felt they had more self-confidence, were excited and want to learn more, have control over their future and have friends who understand me.

Eighty-eight and nine-tenths percent like having classes as part of the shelter and over half report it is hard to come to the program. Sometimes learners find it hard because of other appointments, work and life in the shelter.

All of the respondents indicated that they would like to continue taking classes after they leave the shelter. Learners indicated that support from teachers and transportation would help them continue. The majority indicated they would like to take GED classes or participate in tutoring after they leave the shelter and 33.3% indicated they would like to go to college. All of the learners indicated that education is very important.

# PROGRAM PROFILE

## I. Program Summary

### Program History & Context

Project Lighthouse (PL) is in its second year of operation as a pilot project which provides instruction in basic education to homeless individuals at Long Island Shelter, Boston's largest homeless shelter. The lead agency in this project is Literacy Volunteers of Massachusetts, Inc. (LVM), an 18 year old non-profit organization which provides free, individualized instruction in basic reading and writing to Massachusetts adults over age 16. LVM identifies and trains volunteer tutors, matching them with individuals requesting services; it also offers extensive support and networking opportunities to tutors and learners. LVM's support activities include developing materials, publishing newsletters and a journal of student writing, and convening support groups and conferences.

LVM's partner agency and the primary site for Project Lighthouse, Long Island Shelter (LIS), serves many of the most invisible and neglected members of the Boston community. LIS guests are women and men who live out their daily struggles against poverty, unemployment, drugs and alcohol-- as well as multiple other physical and mental challenges and social injustices-- right in our midst, on Boston's streets and Commons. Every evening, LIS offers a bed, meals, showers, medical care and other necessities (such as clothing and toiletries) to 300 homeless men and 60 homeless women. Between 3:00 and 7:00 p.m. daily, hundreds of men and women line up at the LISWoods-Mullen Intake Center, where they see a nurse and are checked for alcohol, drugs and weapons.

From intake, guests board a bus for the 20 minute trip out to the island. The shelter is located well out in Boston Harbor, beyond Quincy; its buses go through a police checkpoint. Because LIS is a non-residential shelter, these same buses return most guests to the streets each morning between 6:30 and 8:30 a.m. Admission is on a first-come, first-serve basis. The Woods-Mullen Shelter, a Long Island affiliate located at the BCH intake site, provides an additional 160 beds. Woods-Mullen and LIS intake are currently under attack from the Neighborhood Association in nearby Worcester Square, whose members dislike the sight of guests waiting to enter intake, and who will ask the city to move this facility.

LIS sees its mission as going beyond sheltering, responding to as many of its guests' needs as possible: offering a sympathetic ear and, when it can, a way out of homelessness and other problems. In the past two years, it has developed a Client Services Department and added four new programs, of which Project Lighthouse is one. LIS offers alcohol and drug counseling, (including a "Holding and Stabilization Program"), housing search assistance, employment assistance, a work experience program, and a basic education program in which PL is the largest component. The Department of Mental Health, the Veterans' Administration and Bridge, a youth agency, also send representatives to do on-site work with LIS guests. A case management system also facilitates referrals to a variety of outside services, including educational programs at Harriet Tubman House, the Boston Business School, and UMass/Boston. Wherever possible, LIS draws on community resources and volunteers: for preparing and serving suppers, for donating clothing and toiletries, for tutoring. A non-profit volunteer group, Friends of Long Island Shelter, also raises funds for the Shelter.

Project Lighthouse grew out of a need identified by LIS staff, particularly the Assistant Coordinator of Client Services, Amy Knudsen. In a 1987 survey, 54% of LIS guests indicated that they did not have a high school diploma; (they do not, however, have statistics on the literacy rates). Amy Knudsen referred some guests to outside programs; yet, the need far outstripped the number of available spaces. Further, LIS staff felt that only a few existing programs provided the kind of caring and supportive learning environments in which their guests might succeed, in view of the fact that many homeless learners have multiple other problems as well as negative experiences with schooling. Finally, LIS guests were often reluctant to enter outside programs even when spaces were available and the environment was supportive. Ms. Knudsen began tutoring several guests on her own and was seeking funding for a program based on volunteer tutoring services when the McKinney funding became available.

LIS staff liked the flexible, individualized nature of services that could be provided through tutoring; they saw Literacy Volunteers of Massachusetts, the largest provider of one-on-one volunteer tutoring services in the state, as their natural partner in this initiative. At the time it joined LIS to create Project Lighthouse, LVM was already serving some homeless people in its ongoing program. Its staff and Board were seeking opportunities to expand its services to the homeless. To coordinate PL, LVM hired as PL Coordinator someone with extensive experience in both adult educator and homelessness. Esther Leonelli has worked for more than 10 years as a volunteer in a number of Boston-area shelters and served as a board member for two shelters. Although the grant funds only this one position, in practice this program is co-coordinated: Ms. Leonelli, referred to in this report as the Volunteer Coordinator, and Ms. Knudsen, the shelter Education Coordinator, both work half-time on Project Lighthouse. When this report speaks of "PL staff," it is referring to these two people.

## Program Vision: Population Served, Philosophy, Goals

In February 1989, Project Lighthouse started providing LIS guests with one and a half to three hours of one-to-one tutoring instruction in basic reading and writing, supplemented by weekly counseling. The program also assists participants in securing entry into other adult education programs. PL focuses on serving homeless individuals who read below the 8th grade level, and particularly those with 0 - 4th grade skill levels. (In practice PL is flexible and also serves guests with higher-level skills when other appropriate options cannot be found.) Contracted "education beds" at the shelter are reserved for PL participants while they are enrolled. Participants are also eligible to stay in the shelter on the days they are being tutored or are doing homework-- a privilege normally reserved for elderly, ill or medicated guests or those participating in some designated activity like an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting.

PL staff have a very inclusive concept of which LIS guests are eligible to participate in the basic education program; their only criteria is that a guest be interested in learning. PL enrolls many guests who are viewed by other staff as "hard core," or "not appropriate" because they have substance abuse problems or are medicated for mental illnesses. PL staff often have to justify such decisions to other staff. PL also reaches out to encourage guests who are considered to be "unmotivated" and who wouldn't be considered eligible for work experience or employment programs. PL staff are also flexible about continuing to work with people who have been banned from the shelter, and try to track guests who have disappeared. Guests who leave LIS are encouraged to continue with PL, to keep in touch with the staff and to keep meeting their tutors.

This broad and holistic policy about who is eligible for adult education under Project Lighthouse derives from the partners' concept of the scope and purpose of this initiative. The LIS/LVM partnership believes that:

> "Once the basic needs of a homeless individual are met (for example food, clothing and shelter), that person, with support, can focus personal energies on moving 'beyond homelessness'. . . Learning to read is viewed as a major life change which can lead to increased empowerment. Volunteer tutors can provide the basis for educational growth/support for persons residing in shelters, and can be a link to the wider community beyond the shelter."

In Project Lighthouse, the tutor/learner relationship is viewed as the primary vehicle for learning, and is valued as both an end in itself and a means to other ends. The tutor/learner relationship aims to offer individual attention and consistent relationships to guests in a large, crowded shelter. It is a means for developing learner self-esteem as well as a wide range of functional and problem-solving skills; by drawing on materials of interest to the learner to teach reading, writing and math skills, the tutor engages homeless adults in goal-setting and planning. Finally, tutoring is seen as a bridge for homeless learners to enter adult education activities outside the shelter.

## Distinguishing Characteristics

- PL is providing individualized, learner-centered adult education in a very large, non-residential shelter.
- PL is developing an educational program that focuses on the individual tutor/learner relationship as the primary learning vehicle, a vehicle that is not tied to the shelter site.
- PL offers contracted beds, lockers and stay-in privileges to program participants. This helps stabilize them, since otherwise they would have to leave the shelter each day.
- In its second year, PL has developed very innovative and participatory group learning activities as adjuncts to tutoring.
- PL tutor training addresses homelessness in considerable depth through an orientation visit to LIS, information on homelessness, and examination of individual preconceptions.
- PL staff are reaching out to learners who remain beyond the reach of most programs: they're prepared to do whatever is necessary to work with guests generally thought of as "hard core" or "unmotivated" and those who have substance abuse, mental illness or other challenges.
- PL has a very broad concept of the kinds of skills and awarenesses adult education with the homeless must address if it is to be empowering.
- PL is incorporating off-site gatherings such as bowling and picnicking to provide recognition events for learners and tutors.

- PL is co-coordinated, and the two coordinators have experience and knowledge of both homelessness and adult education. They also have a broad understanding of political & environmental factors and the impact they have on LIS guests and the PL program.

- PL staff is piloting the use of a variety of instruments for documenting the achievement of a major program goal: this program's impact on participants' self-esteem.

- PL has generated and disseminated a wide range of program materials, and has taken a leading role in developing networks among "adult education with homeless" teachers and providers statewide.

- PL coordinators have been applying a very broad and innovative idea of "positive outcomes" that acknowledges learners as whole people with multiple problems and looks to adult education as an ongoing process.

- Both LVM and LIS are working to institutionalize the Project Lighthouse initiative and to integrate learning from PL into their other programs; both have made extensive in-kind and staff contributions.

## Program Strengths

- A dynamic partnership has evolved between LVM and LIS, rooted in their deep commitment to learners, shared program philosophy and growing mutual respect. A problem-solving approach has helped the partners work around barriers and come to understand each other's concerns and constraints. Both LVM and LIS have committed considerable staff and in-kind resources (beyond the grant) to making this program work.

- The program has made remarkable progress in establishing itself and becoming institutionalized in the work of both partner agencies. Both agencies see PL as an important part of their mission and a valuable learning opportunity. PL coordinators have had considerable success in educating other LIS staff about the value of this kind of learning experience for guests' stabilization and growth, and have secured a lot of staff cooperation.

- Program coordinators are working with determination and vision in a very difficult environment to provide affirming, high quality learning experiences to guests who have very few sources of stability or concern in their lives. The coordinators both have extensive experience working with homeless individuals. They have been integral in conceiving and establishing this initiative, as well as in the gritty daily effort of making it work.

- PL has created a committed core group of tutors and learners. Coordinators and administrators are impressed with the quality of individual attention tutors provide, and the effect of this relationship on participant learning and self-esteem. Learners refer new shelter guests to the program.

- Several of the tutor pairs have developed warm and lasting relationships. Three have continued after the guests left the shelter. In some cases, there is rapid turnover of guests or tutors, but on the whole the experiences seem to be positive for both. Tutors report good support from the Volunteer Coordinator.

- Tutor-generated curriculum is learner-centered, attempting to draw out the learner and to address his or her interests and concerns. It makes effective use of journals, "whole language" methods and relevant materials as tools for learning. Because tutoring is individualized and responsive, it can help overcome some participants' negative feelings about learning.

- The Shelter Education Coordinator has developed an innovative and participatory learning group that has together re-written the welcome brochure that Long Island guests get upon entry. This group not only creates a supportive group climate for learning, but also heightens interest and critical thinking by engaging guests in reflection on topics that concern them.

- Coordinators have been applying a very broad and holistic idea of positive outcomes. It is obvious to them that "you can't use traditional measures." For Project Lighthouse, positive outcomes include: opening up and really talking to someone about one's life & problems; beginning to push to get housing after a long period of apathy; leaving the educational program to really deal with a substance abuse problem.

- Tutor training addresses homelessness in considerable depth. A packet of readings supplements the in-class training segment. All tutors also have to participate in an orientation at the shelter before they are accepted into training. LIS is, in effect providing a two way educational experience in which tutors learn about homelessness and shelter life as much as guests learn basic skills and self-esteem.

- Intake & assessment are experimenting with some instruments to measure self-esteem, as well as the traditional measures of academic skills. They are also documenting learner goals and their progress towards them.

- PL is committed to documenting outcomes of its work, and sharing this information with others doing education with the homeless. LVM is integrating its experience with the homeless into its regular programs, teaching other tutors about it and presenting at statewide and national conferences.

## Concerns & Tensions

- A great deal is expected of PL tutors and the relationships they establish with learners. Most of the program's goals rest on tutoring and tutoring relationships; yet, it's hard to tell to what extent these are working towards the program goals for learner empowerment. It is particularly difficult to assess how equal and empowering these relationships are. While there is very effective training and support for tutors, the fact that it is a mutually voluntary relationship makes it difficult to monitor. Further, there is no place for peer learning the exclusive tutor/learner relationship. Role and boundary issues are particularly difficult for tutors to deal with. PL staff are clear on the fact that you "need to take a learner as a whole person, with whatever issues they bring;" LIS administrators spoke of the need for tutors to have a dual orientation to literacy and homelessness. Yet, three tutors interviewed made it clear that they did not want to be "chummy," to focus on life issues in the classroom, or to get into "social work." Staff also have to deal with the tension of deciding how much about a learner's other concerns to tell tutors (e.g. whether dealing with substance abuse or medications).

- It is particularly difficult and ambitious to have tutors implement with homeless learners a model of education that is driven by learner goals. PL expects that tutors will be able not only to establish a healthy, mutual relationship and teach basic skills, but also to help learners articulate and work towards their goals. This is a big task, particularly with shelter guest who feel little sense of control over their lives, or who have no experience of setting and achieving manageable goals. Finally, as the Volunteer Coordinator noted, "we're trying to help people completely reconceptualize education, to be more active in their own learning." This is as much true for tutors as for learners. It's a lot to expect; and it's difficult to assess.

- One and one-half to three hours/week is not nearly enough educational time to meet this program's important goals, to be really empowering for the learners they serve. While scheduling needs to remain flexible, learners would benefit from the option to do some kind of educational activity for two or three hours at least three days/week.

- Tutor recruitment is an ongoing problem, largely because Long Island Shelter has only allowed tutoring to go on during the day. Staff are concerned about space, safety and accountability for night tutors. Lack of public transportation to LIS is also a barrier to tutor recruitment. Both of these factors contribute to the fact that the guests, who are primarily men (shelter guests are 71% male) and largely African-American, are tutored primarily by white women and a few white men. This continues to be a problem despite the considerable effort PL staff have devoted to it.

- The long delays in getting evening tutoring established at LIS are indicative of the problems PL staff confront in trying to establish an innovative program at a large, hierarchical institution. LIS administrators have been enthusiastic about the program; but PL staff need more administrative backing to get direct care staff's acceptance of this program. With so many channels to go through, they can't get it institutionalized by their own efforts when they don't have the needed authority.

- This program serves very few women, a smaller percentage even than the percentage of women among shelter guests (13% in PL, 30% in the shelter).

- PL is very committed to a "tutoring model" for LIS; consequently, other important educational activities like counseling and the Education Coordinator's class are viewed as adjuncts to tutoring rather than equally important or complementary. The class was created to fill a gap for learners waiting to be matched with tutors. Although it proved to be a powerful forum for learning, the class was not seriously considered as an educational option equal to tutoring. A better integration of activities could offer homeless learners a variety of supportive and stimulating learning relationships: with a tutor, with a teacher, with a counselor, with peer learners.

- Coordinators are finding the counting and enrollment system especially difficult to work with in LIS, given that guests come and go on a daily basis. Participants in this education program are given beds and the option to stay in during the day, but the atmosphere and pace of life is quite different here from more residential shelters. Even regular participants tend to disappear for periods. It is very hard for staff to decide when to drop someone from the rolls and "re-match" their tutor; very often, a participant will re-surface soon after their enrollment has been terminated. Early in the program they said that participants would be dropped if they missed three tutoring sessions, but they try to err on the side of letting people stay in or come back in. It is also difficult to wait until someone has completed 12 hours to consider them enrolled; this could take six or eight weeks, if the learner is only being tutored once a week for one and a half to two hours.

- The PL coordinators have conflicting demands on their time and spend more time doing logistical and administrative work than in direct service. This is particularly distressing since both do exceptional tutoring, teaching and materials development. The Education Coordinator works half-time at this and half-time at other shelter duties, which take precedence over PL duties. It's particularly hard for her in the winter, when stay-in days multiply staff duties. She also feels some conflict between her roles: she is the "good guy" who is inviting guests to confide in her and to take a chance on this program; at the same time, she is the "bad guy" who has the same authority to bar a guest as any other staff member. The Volunteer Coordinator's position is also half-time, with only part of the time spent at LIS. She often adds to this by coming in on weekends when needed.

- Follow-up is a perennial problem for this program; because LIS is a non-residential shelter, participants' attendance is not always regular, with many dropping out for periods and then re-enrolling. PL participants also have many other concerns competing for their time, and this shelter is not one that attempts to put guests on a regimented schedule. Both coordinators spend a lot of time trying to track learners who disappear or are barred, and they spend time talking to learners who want to come back into the program. They have built bridges with intake and with the night staff, which has reduced the incidence of barring among participants a little. Nonetheless, it must be assumed that follow-up will continue to be a major concern for PL. Connecting learners with tutors who can follow them in and out of the shelter is only one piece of the solution. PL, at present, doesn't have nearly enough staff time to do effective follow-up.

- PL suffers from a lack of space and visibility at the shelter. They need a desk, files, posters and other signs of their presence. For now, they keep all records in the Education Coordinator's tiny back office. Tutoring space, like all space at LIS, is at a premium: during the day screened-off spaces in the cafeteria are available, but at night that gets very noisy.

- Transition to other adult education programs isn't usually an option for PL learners who want to move into other programs. It is the experience of PL staff that their program often cannot effectively transition learners for two reasons:
  - (1) There are very few ABE, GED and ESL slots in the Boston area, and learners often have to wait months for an opening (which is particularly difficult for homeless guests, who need quick response to their initiatives for success in getting stabilized); and
  - (2) They do not find many existing program with supportive, caring learning environments where homeless learners could continue to experience success as they had in PL. (Harriet Tubman House was mentioned as one of the few such programs.)

## II. Program Design & Implementation

### Education Services Offered

- Type and Schedule of Educational Services

PL participants are provided between one and a half and three hours of tutoring per week at a time and place that is convenient for them and for their tutor. Tutoring is available seven days/week from 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. At the time of the visit, getting tutoring time extended to include evening hours was a critical priority for PL staff.

Counseling is available with the LIS Education Coordinator five days/week, mostly Saturdays and Sundays, 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. Participants are asked to meet with her weekly, for as long or short a visit as the participant wants.

Group instruction is available during one two hour weekly session. The Shelter Education Coordinator started meeting in April with groups of five to seven learners who were waiting to be matched with tutors. The class has worked so well that she hopes to expand it to two times per week, for up to 10 learners. She hopes eventually to bring in other resources to work on life skills with this group.

- Learner Recruitment & Intake

For the first six months of Project Lighthouse, the Shelter Education Coordinator did extensive outreach: announcements at meals, posters, discussions with night staff and intake workers. As the program has become established, word-of-mouth among guests has become the primary means of referral. Staff can also leave word in a log if they identify potential learners from their intake forms or other contacts.

As discussed under "Program Vision," PL staff is committed to reaching out to guests generally considered to be "hard core" or "unmotivated," as well as to substance abusers or mentally challenged individuals who have become somewhat stabilized. Their only criteria is the guest's desire to learn. This creates additional responsibilities for PL staff-- including the need to educate other staff, since these guests would not be considered for most other programs at the shelter. PL staff are also willing to stick with participants, taking them back into the program after they have been barred or have left for other reasons.

The Education Coordinator does intake for the program in several meetings. This usually occurs over a period of one to two weeks. She wants guests to have an opportunity to talk and think about the commitment they are making, and to take responsibility for coming back for the follow-up appointments. Very few of those who come in to discuss the program choose not to enroll. The Education Coordinator completes an intake form on the first visit, and she does part of an initial assessment on the second visit. This spring, an experienced tutor was trained to carry out the academic part of the testing. This has freed the coordinator's time for other things. The full assessment includes a test of basic reading and writing skills (READ for lower-level, pre-GED or GED predictor for higher skills) as well as the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Test. This was added recently because staff felt they should have some way of documenting learners' progress on self-esteem, which is fundamental to PL's idea of a "positive outcome." Later, both tutors and learners go through an LVM assessment to match learning styles. Tutors and learners will also work with the Volunteer Coordinator to identify learner goals, which serve as the basis for tutoring work.

Once they have been assessed, the Volunteer Coordinator matches learners with an appropriate tutor. Although 11 tutors were trained in PL's first year, this spring there was a waiting list of learners waiting to be matched with tutors. Both the Volunteer Coordinator and the Shelter Education Coordinator took on some of these learners on a temporary basis; the Education Coordinator also started a weekly class with five to seven of them, which will be discussed below.

The Education Coordinator can refer LIS guests to a variety of programs, including PL. She suggests this program to guests with lower-level skills (up to 8th grade, especially 0 - 4 levels). She will also suggest it to guests with pre-GED or GED-level skills who are hesitant about being referred to outside programs, or for whom appropriate spaces are not available. PL staff will test learners for learning disabilities if tutoring seems to indicate it is a problem; but they are reluctant to do this kind of testing and labeling before placement since they feel it continues the "labeling" guests have been subject to all their lives. For guests with disabilities, they will try to get Massachusetts Rehabilitation to pay for specialized tutoring. They also make special materials available to tutors for working with dyslexic learners.

Guests have the option of tutoring at LIS or "off-island." Several tutor/learner pairs meet at Woods-Mullen Day Drop-In Center, and several others meet at libraries in Boston and Quincy. Those who tutor at LIS generally meet in a screened-off area of the dining room, one of the few quiet spaces available. Long Island Hospital, which adjoins the shelter, also offers some tutoring space.

- Enrollment & Retention

In its first year, PL met its goal of serving 15 participants (in 10 instructional slots). PL provided over 250 instructional hours to homeless learners, through the services of 11 volunteer tutors it recruited and trained. In its second year of operation, PL raised its goals for providing instructional services to 20 slots. As of April 30, 15 learners were enrolled in the program.

PL is successful in serving a racially diverse group of guests: as of April 30, 73% of its 15 participants were African-American and 27% were white. The program enrolled a slightly lower percentage of women than LIS serves overall (the program serves 13% women and the shelter serves abut 30% women). As mentioned earlier, some reasons staff offered for this include: women's higher general level of reading skills; and the nature of the female population at LIS. A large proportion of women are elderly schizophrenics who have been on the streets for many years. They are usually not interested in this program.

PL does enroll a higher proportion of younger than older guests: 12 of 15 participants are between 21 and 40 years old, and none are over 50. The median age at LIS is also 31. PL has also not focused on the 25% of shelter guests who are age 25 or younger. When possible, the Education Coordinator refers them to Bridge Over Troubled Waters (unless they have been there and refuse to go back). She noted that, "It's a whole different thing to work with the younger guests, an increasing number of whom are under 18. Not only are their goals not defined, but what they foresee for themselves does not include a job or a stable home. They have no experience of these."

PL has a high retention rate for program participants, which is remarkable given the highly unstable nature of life in a non-residential shelter. Five of their 15 learners have been enrolled longer than six months and one more has been enrolled more than three months. Three of these learners at one point left the program and have been re-enrolled. PL has found that three months is a critical point for participants. At that point, learners are stabilized in the program and have some commitment to it, so they are more likely to come back if their learning is interrupted.

PL coordinators often serve as advocates for participants who have been barred from the shelter but who want to continue with the program. One coordinator noted that other LIS staff will now often call her about problems with a participant before they bar that person; there is growing understanding among shelter staff of how education can fit into a process of growth and stabilization. Several learners who have left the shelter to move into transitional housing, start "work experience" programs or enter another educational program have continued to meet with their tutors. They have the option of meeting at LIS-- to maintain contact with shelter staff-- or to meet "off island," whichever they prefer.

- Learning Activities, Curriculum and Environment

**Tutoring**

At Project Lighthouse, the tutor/learner relationship is viewed as the primary learning forum and vehicle for meeting a wide range of program goals: providing a positive and mutually rewarding adult relationship; carrying out learner-centered work to improve reading and writing skills; developing learner self-esteem; offering continuity and educational advocacy; serving as a feeder system into longer-term educational programs, vocational training, substance abuse program, housing, etc. Tutors are guests' "educational advocates," and they can stay with the learner if he or she leaves the shelter. Educational counseling and group learning activities are seen as adjuncts supporting the tutor/learner relationship.

This individualized "learner-centered" approach to tutoring seeks to develop a wide range of basic skills and to improve learners' self-image. For PL staff, adult education with homeless individuals should address a wide range of skills: reading for information and fun; writing for tasks, self-reflection and venting; everyday math; problem-solving; critical thinking and assessing information; advocating better for oneself and one's family; clarifying personal goals; and exercising one's rights. PL also believes that the learning experience must help learners develop self-esteem and work towards realizing their potential.

The goals stated above serve as guidelines for tutors, who work with learners to generate their own curriculum. This learner-centered curriculum attempts to draw out the learner and to address his or her interests and concerns. By engaging the learner in setting individual goals and planning to meet them, tutoring can empower learners even as it teaches basic skills. PL coordinators, as well as LIS and LVM administrators, feel strongly that a "set curriculum" for homeless individuals would stereotype homeless learners. It would violate the principles of "learner-centered" adult education, which draws curriculum from what participants want to learn. They emphasize that the quality of the relationship between learners and tutors is as critical as the subject matter they address. It is very important to guests in a large urban shelter to have consistent attention from someone who comes just to see them. Tutor/learner relationships are valued as more equal than relationships shelter guests usually experience with staff, since tutors don't have to come to LIS, and they also don't have power over guests (i.e. the power to bar guests from the shelter).

A folder and journal are maintained for each learner. One learner showed visitors a folder with a series of fabulous satiric comics on homelessness, life in the shelter, and other traumas in his life. He's written a powerful series of letters to public officials, including one to President Bush. Reading and journal writing are used to help learners reflect and vent; much of this work uses a "whole language" approach to learning. The Volunteer Coordinator developed a series of materials on taxes and budgeting, and presented a tax workshop this spring. She has also used "prevocational" kinds of materials with this same guest who wants to become an Emergency Medical Technician and another who is interested in police work. Several tutors have also accompanied learners to open bank accounts. Other tutors use newspaper articles or materials on sports as a way to respond to learners' stated interests. Tutors have available to them a library of resource materials including books, pamphlets, learning games, and videotapes as well as workbook series. Documents and forms relating to the shelter, SSI, welfare, housing search and other services guests are likely to be involved with are also available to build lessons around. The Volunteer Coordinator has also compiled an indexed bibliography of LVM materials, with information on reading level as well as content.

## Counseling

It seems clear that the quality of relationships PL coordinators have with guests is a key component in the program's success. Both are familiar presences at LIS, and both interact comfortably with a wide range of guests. Part of the contract guests sign to enroll in PL is agreeing "to meet with Amy [the Education Coordinator] once a week to discuss my program and any problems I may be having." She is flexible about how learners use this time, whether they just "show their faces or get into deep discussions."

The Education Coordinator is also the primary contact for staff and learners when problems come up. Staff will call her about a guest who is having problems, and guests will often call her themselves. Guests who leave the shelter or get barred from it often call her to ask about staying in the program; and several learners who have entered transitional housing have called when they felt they might have to come back to Long Island. Her philosophy is: "When you take on a person, it's not just for education, but the whole person. People here have multiple issues. How much are you ready to do? It's a tough responsibility, but that's what it takes to help somebody move." She also refers guests, as needed, for more intensive counseling with Substance Abuse Counselors or the Department of Mental Health. The Volunteer Coordinator is also very accessible: several days each week she spends time at LIS talking with guests and tutors and serving as a tutor herself.

## Class

In April, the Education Coordinator started an innovative and participatory learning group which has met weekly and has, together, re-written the welcome brochure Long Island guests get upon entering the shelter. The group started with five to seven members, and will be limited to 10. It started out meeting weekly, and may expand to twice weekly. In the re-writing process, the group read aloud together, and learners at different skill levels helped each other. Learners and the PL Coordinator discussed the brochure's content and format at length. They found that they, as guests, have very valuable knowledge on what rules and procedures are most important to know. For example, guests emphasized the importance of telling new arrivals to keep their bus ticket, because it's also the meal ticket. They also discussed at length whether it was truthful to write that guests should "ask any staff member for help," when there are some staff they don't believe are helpful.

This participatory process is valuable for meeting multiple learning goals: it creates a supportive group climate for learning and heightens critical thinking by engaging guests in discussion on a topic of great concern to them. The Education Coordinator, who facilitated the group, was impressed with how open learners were with each other, and how much enthusiasm they had for the project. This activity gained strength from focusing on a potentially empowering topic, where guests can address issues of structure, authority, rights, who knows what, etc. The group also provided a place where learners and staff could talk about "alternative" ways of learning that were nothing like what participants remembered of school.

Finally, the learning group addresses reading, writing and grammar skills in a context that is meaningful for learners. In the future, the Education Coordinator would also like to work with a group on a "Survival Guide" and to do some "life skills" work.

#### Other Activities

PL staff emphasize that the social gatherings like bowling and picnic that they have held to recognize three and six months of program participation are also part of the "curriculum." These provide an important social outlet for learners.

### • Student Evaluation

PL does ongoing assessment of learners' progress through review of student folders and conversations with tutors. There are no established periods for assessment. Learners are not dropped from the program for reasons related to "progress;" they are usually only dropped after missing a number of tutoring sessions. A log is used to communicate between coordinators, learners and tutors and to record attendance. By the summer, monthly attendance will be recorded on a database. The Education Coordinator also uses a case management approach to make notes on her weekly counseling sessions with learners.

Other than intake assessment, skills testing is done only when it "relates to learners' goals and life changes," for example, if learners request it or if they need a score to enter another program. The Volunteer Coordinator did make up a mid-term test when one learner requested it (the intake test, READ, only has two versions).

PL is piloting the use of various instruments to document the program's impact on learner's self-esteem, a major program goal. They began this spring using the Rosenberg Test at intake, and plan to re-administer it after three months.

### • Tutor Selection, Training & Support

PL attributes much of its success to a committed core of tutors. As one LIS administrator stated, "It's hard to be a tutor here. Not only do they need to be interested in helping people learn, but they also need to be willing to deal with what's going on in people's lives besides learning. This dual orientation-- homelessness and illiteracy-- is critical."

#### Recruitment

In its first year, PL trained 11 tutors, most of whom are still with the program. By May of this year, PL had identified four individuals who have completed the shelter orientation and want to be trained as tutors. Unfortunately, this was not large enough a group to hold the intensive 21 hour tutor training, so a backlog of learners was developing. The Volunteer Coordinator was exploring other options for getting these tutors trained-- for example placing them in a regular LVM training and doing the 3-hour homeless training component separately.

The Volunteer Coordinator uses a variety of creative approaches to attract tutors to this program. She runs public service announcements on radio stations and cable channels; puts listings in community calendars; makes announcements at literacy meetings as well as corporate, community and church events. Feature stories about the project have been published, and a 30 minute video was shown on Arlington

Cable. In addition, the Volunteer Coordinator has set up a variety of "feeder systems:" LVM includes a special brochure about Project Lighthouse in its regular mailing, and their database can also be analyzed by zip-code to identify potential tutors who live near Long Island. The Crane Public Library in Quincy also refers tutors.

In addition to strategies that focus on recruiting homeless tutors from among people who express a general interest in tutoring, the Volunteer Coordinator has a variety of strategies to get tutors from among those who already work with the homeless in other capacities. She observed that: "Initially, I got more people who first wanted to tutor, then agreed to go to the shelter. Now, three of the last four tutors have been regular shelter people who want to tutor." She has approached church supper clubs and "lunch bunches" who regularly come into LIS, and has also enlisted the help of the volunteer coordinators who work on other shelter programs. She is thinking of proposing some sort of buddy system whereby tutors could come together and offer each other support.

One major barrier to recruiting tutors was the restriction on evening tutoring. At the time of the evaluation visit, tutoring at the shelter was still restricted to 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 a.m. This eliminated a number of interested tutors who work day shifts and are only available evenings. It also made it particularly difficult to increase the number of minority tutors, a PL goal for the year. Currently, most tutors are white women who can come into LIS during daytime hours. Resolving the evening tutoring issue was a priority concern for both PL coordinators-- it puts a strict limitation on how much the program can expand. They had gotten LIS Administrative approval to start evening tutoring on a small scale, but they still had to work out with night staff issue of space and oversight. Administrators and frontline staff were concerned about having someone "in charge" of evening tutors, and were nervous because neither coordinator would be on duty. Transportation is another concern for both tutors and learners. There is no public transportation out to LIS other than the guest buses, which leave in the morning and return at night. It is possible to arrange an off-island meeting site, when necessary.

### Selection and Training

Some criteria the Volunteer Coordinator uses to select tutors include: willingness to complete the 21 hour training and to make a nine month commitment to the program; comfort with an orientation visit to LIS; listening skills and not being too judgmental.

PL's Volunteer Coordinator has developed a thoughtful and well-planned tutor training model which incorporates a lot of information on homelessness as well as on adult learning. Before they start training, prospective tutors have an LIS orientation visit to learn about the context in which they will work and to see how comfortable they feel in the shelter. (A number of people drop out at this point). The training takes place over several meetings: two Saturdays and two evenings, six evenings, three full days, or whichever other configuration is most convenient; it is conducted primarily by the Volunteer Coordinator. Current PL tutors and learners are invited to share their experiences. Training tries to give tutors a sense of what it will be like to work with PL learners: what potential rewards, concerns or problems might be. For example, they learn that it is not unusual for learners to miss tutoring sessions because of other issues in their lives; and it is not unusual for learners to drop out of tutoring for a while, then re-enroll.

A 3-hour segment of this training is devoted to homeless issues: providing information on homelessness and helping tutors examine their preconceptions about homeless people. The Shelter Education Coordinator and another shelter worker conduct this segment. This segment brings up issues like substance abuse, lice, AIDS, TB and hygiene, which staff believe "will always be at the back of tutors' minds if we don't get it out in the open."

**Tutor Support**

The Volunteer Coordinator emphasizes that tutors in a program like this can require "a limitless amount of support." For many it is the first time they have taught, and they want reassurance that they are "doing it right," as well as materials and ideas for tutoring sessions. Tutors may need help in understanding all the issues their learner is facing, which poses a dilemma for coordinators: how much should they tell tutors about learners' other problems? When learners leave the shelter, tutors want information about them and a way to stay in contact, which is often difficult when a learner disappears or is barred. The Volunteer Coordinator uses a log to communicate regularly with tutors, in addition to calling and meeting with them periodically. The Volunteer puts information on workshops and other training opportunities in the log, and encourages tutors to take advantage of these. She has also convened tutor get-togethers where tutors could offer each other support and advice.

All three tutors interviewed praised the Volunteer Coordinator's support, saying that they felt comfortable going to her about any concerns. They all emphasized the importance of ongoing tutor support. They felt that the training, while excellent, could never have prepared them for what they would experience in this program. A major issue for them was the rate of turnover in learners: two of the three had worked with three different learners in less than a year. This is a major disappointment for some who were looking for a longer-term tutoring relationship. After each change, they also have to decide whether to be re-matched with a new learner or to wait in case the previous learner decides to resume tutoring. Not all tutors have this problem; several have been working with the same learners for over a year.

- Learning Outcomes

PL coordinators were clear that: "You can't use traditional outcome measures with this program. You need to develop alternative measures, even if they're more time-consuming."
Given their emphasis on developing self-esteem as a central goal of this project, PL is experimenting with using instruments that record self-esteem factors as both baseline and developmental measures. These include the Rosenberg Scale and the New Jersey DMHH Standard Level of Functioning Scale.

PL has also adopted LVM's system of measuring progress by learner progress towards the goals they have set for themselves. Identifying and working towards learner goals is at the heart of PL's concept of success. Coordinators believe that helping learners make a game plan to deal with the multiple issues they face can be one of PL's major contributions.

PL coordinators seek to broaden the idea of what counts as a "positive outcome," and to take the focus off "transition" as a goal for homeless people. Besides transition to other educational programs, homeless people face all kinds of other "transitions:" housing, job, and decisions to enter a program dealing with some other critical problem like substance abuse. They emphasize that if you are looking at the person as a whole, if might be very positive for a learner to leave the PL program to go into a substance abuse program. The educational experience has been critical for that person in identifying an underlying problem and beginning to deal with it. In another instance, a learner left the program after he decided that he really needed to focus on housing. He had been quite passive about it for a long time, and PL staff feel that this shift indicated improved self-esteem. Other learners continue with PL once they are in transitional housing. Staff feel that it provides a critical support during a period when learners may feel cut adrift from the familiar shelter environment.

The Education Coordinator observed, further, that the whole idea of outcomes must be rethought for a program like this. What happens in PL is very positive, and often empowering for guests-- but it is not linear progress towards some clear end. What frontline staff see as "progress" is very different from how administrators understand "progress:"

> "It's different for the people I work with. People come to me for the opportunity to take a chance. I try not to burden them with criteria or expectations. . . People I work with aren't making linear progress in leaps and bounds. It's more like: forward 2, back 1. Every once in a while, I have someone who makes a big success or moves on to a job or housing, but that's not everyday. I feel equally great when someone comes to me, confides, talks about their problems. At the administrative level, people see transition as the goal. I don't see transition as the 'be-all' and 'end-all.' I'm happy if someone comes back sober-- or comes back at all. I go for the small miracles." (Education Coordinator)

## Program Organization

- Partnership

As discussed under program strengths, Project Lighthouse is founded on a solid partnership in which both partners are very committed to this initiative. Most important is their common philosophy: the two agencies share deep beliefs about the importance of education for the empowerment of homeless people, and both have demonstrated their dedication to offering individualized, client-centered services. Both have committed resources to making PL work: LIS pays half of the Education Coordinator's time and provides support services (described below). LVM's Executive Director provides office support, grant and fiscal management, as well as access to that organization's network of tutor resources, training, conferences, newsletters. Both agencies provide administrative support.

The co-coordinators communicate almost daily, and have established deep trust and mutual respect. Each tries to communicate not only decisions in her areas of responsibility, but also her rationale for these. This approach helps PL coordinators take a productive, problem-solving approach to the many challenges and problems barriers that PL throws up to them. In the process, they come to understand the concerns and constraints faced by each others' agencies.

Coordinators have tried to establish a pattern of regular weekly meetings; more often, they meet to discuss a particular learner or situation. Both coordinators attend state meetings. Coordinators work together on writing quarterly reports, compiling statistics, developing training. They are both also involved in LIS case conference for program participants.

At the administrative level, partners have begun in the second year to meet formally three or four times each year. LIS Administrators observed that the partners "have moved away from the early negotiation and turf-based collaboration to one based on trust and mutual respect. We see that we have the same kinds of stakes in this effort." One clear parallel is that both LVM and LIS have demonstrated their commitment to PL by beginning to institutionalize it in their broader programs. LIS has tried to make linkages between PL and other programs like work experience; it also plans to expand this program to its soon-to-open transitional housing facility as a critical part of the stabilization guests will require to make that transition. LVM has, as discussed, tried to integrate its experience with PL into its other efforts via tutor training, publications and conference presentations.

- Coordination/Management

**Staffing Pattern**

Formally, the PL Coordinator/Trainer (Volunteer Coordinator) is responsible for tutor recruitment, training and support, as well as materials development, documentation and assisting with intake. In practice, this program is co-coordinated: as the Volunteer Coordinator noted, responsibilities are shared and information flows both ways. She sees "much less of a division in this partnership" than in many others. The Education Coordinator does learner recruitment and intake, counseling, and advocacy for the program with other shelter staff. She is also usually the first person learners contact when they have a problem or want to re-enter the program. Coordinators work together on reports, documentation and problem-solving, and learner follow-up. In addition, both PL staff take on learners to tutor, as time allows (this spring, the Education Coordinator started a class instead of tutoring). Both coordinators are skilled educators and quite experienced in work with homeless individuals.

The two coordinators were highly praised by their administrative supervisors. They are considered to be indispensable to the success of this program.

**Management Practices**

PL uses several log books to gather program statistics and to communicate among the various "players." Learners and tutors record attendance in one log book, where they can also leave messages for each other or for the coordinators. Coordinators also leave messages and notices for tutors in this logbook. In addition, the Volunteer Coordinator calls and meets with tutors regularly, and the Education Coordinator sees learners weekly. Both coordinators keep separate records of these meetings. Attendance statistics are compiled monthly from the logbook, and by the summer they will also be on a database.

Enrollment information is gathered by the Education Coordinator at intake into the program. There is a specific intake form for PL that is different from the shelter intake form. This information is compiled quarterly, or more often as needed. Intake assessments and other relevant information are kept in learner files, along with their journals, exercises and other learning materials/activities.

A second logbook is kept for other shelter staff-- particularly night staff-- to communicate with coordinators about issues concerning participants. They also use this log to let her know about new guests who are potential participants. Coordinators leave referrals and information for outreach workers from other services, especially Bridge Over Troubled Waters, a youth agency.

- Support Services

Given its mission of "going beyond sheltering," LIS offers a wide range of support services to its guests. Many of these are important for participants in PL. A medical clinic, psychiatric nurse, drug and alcohol counseling, housing search and employment assistance are offered on-site. Guests can get clothing and toiletries as well as meals, a bed and a locker. The Department of Mental Health, and the Veterans' Administration also send representatives to do on-site work with LIS guests. Alcoholics Anonymous meetings are held at LIS regularly.

A number of educational support services are available to PL participants. PL can refer them for vision tests through LVM, and for assistance with learning disabilities through Massachusetts Rehabilitation. Books and other learning materials are available through the program. Transportation money is available for participants who meet tutors off-island. Daycare is not needed since no LIS guests have their children with them.

LVM also offers extensive support services for tutors: workshops, materials, newsletters, tutor support groups. The LVM Executive Director has also suggested offering the services of an LVM student staff member to start a learner support group at LIS.

- Incentives and Barriers to Participation

**Incentives**

A number of incentives for learners to participate can be identified: the program's contracted beds and lockers; opportunities to have caring, supportive contact with tutors and counselors; the chance to actively take some kind of control over one's life in a situation that affords few options to act. Further, through three and six month program outings, the program also has begun to create a sense of identification and peer support. Finally, learner writings have been posted at shelter events and have been published in LVM journals.

**Barriers**

Project Lighthouse has worked long and hard to eliminate as many barriers as possible to participation. They seek out guests who would not be considered for other programs, including substance abusers and the mentally challenged; they are flexible about enrollment and re-enrollment; and they try to maintain contact with participants who have left the island or the program. Further, PL has created an educational model that eliminates many of the negative features of school, which tries to create positive, mutually respectful relationships instead.

Remaining barriers include: lack of space for tutoring and evening tutoring hours; limited understanding of the program on the part of other LIS staff; limited capacity to provide services to learners with higher-level academic skills; and limited staff time for follow-up. Another serious barrier is the lack of appropriate slots in other Boston adult education programs, into which PL participants might transfer.

- Transition & Follow-Up

**Transition**

PL coordinators believe that transition is much less a focus of their activities than in some other programs. While a few of their participants transition to other educational programs, housing or a job, most are struggling to get by and not experiencing any such benchmark events. Coordinators emphasize that in a holistic program, choosing to leave this educational program to focus on another goal like housing search or recovery from substance abuse must be seen as a positive transition. "Getting a learner to recognize they have a problem, and to begin to do something about it, is a big success."

Other learners continue with PL once they are in transitional housing. LIS administrators would like to see this program enroll more transitional housing guests, since they feel that it provides a critical support during a period when learners may feel cut adrift from the support at the shelter. As one coordinator stated:

> "The transitional programs expect so much independence, guests aren't used to it. Tutoring helps create other kinds of functioning so that people don't go back to what they know. That often happens– people go back to what's familiar and safe, and they often feel it's safer to come back here than to deal with their other problems. Tutoring helps to find other solutions, to get them out of being a shelter client."

Through the Education Coordinator, participants can be enrolled in other programs both inside and outside the shelter. These include work experience programs with the Central Artery and elsewhere, as well as educational programs. PL has referred learners to ABE, ESL and GED programs at Harriet Tubman House, Operation Bootstrap, the Cambridge Learning Center and Bridge Over Troubled Waters.

**Follow-Up**

PL's tutoring model is designed to provide continuity in learner's education as they move out of or back into the shelter. PL has contact with three learners who live off the island and with three former PL learners. PL staff allow learners who have dropped out of or been barred from the shelter to re-enroll; this is a fairly common occurrence. Both coordinators spend a lot of time trying to track learners who disappear or are barred, and they spend time talking to learners who want to come back into the program. They have built bridges with intake and with the night staff, which has slightly reduced the incidence of barring among participants. PL at present doesn't have nearly enough staff time to do effective follow-up. It is hard to imagine what effective follow-up would look like in this situation.

- Program Assessment

PL uses the annual evaluation and quarterly partner meetings to assess program progress and direction. Coordinators assess progress on a more regular basis, particularly as they work to address specific concerns or challenges. These assessment practices seem to serve the program well.

- Expansion/Innovation of Services

Coordinators and administrators alike want to expand the PL program to include contracted beds at the Woods-Mullen shelter, and possibly also at the new LIS transitional housing site. To do so, they will have to address constraints on staff time, evening tutoring, and tutor availability. If they can identify funding, LIS Administrators would like to hire a full-time person to support the Education Coordinator. She asked for a half-time person to do Education Coordination and leave her free to work full-time on Project Lighthouse. Administrators' "long-range dream" is to operate an educational drop-in center for homeless people across the city, where they could deal with education, jobs and training. Administrators and Coordinators would like to expand services to guests with higher-level skills, to complement PL's focus on 0 - 8th grade skills.

In addition, coordinators feel the program needs more space and visibility at LIS. They would like a desk, a file, posters, and tutoring space. They are also working on integrating PL with other client services and strengthening ties with intake workers. LVM would like to offer staff resources for setting up a learner support group with PL participants. They would like to expand their efforts to educate other tutors and adult educators about working with homeless learners.

## III. Recommendations From and To the Program

### Recommendations From Project Lighthouse

- Drop the 12 hour floor for counted learners as an enrolled participants. Think more in terms of "benchmarks," which are likely to be program-specific.
- Broaden the idea of positive outcome to include things like leaving the program to deal with a substance abuse problem, or taking more ownership on getting housing and, therefore, leaving the education program. Make sure that reporting forms reflect this, and also reflect greater emphasis on learner goals.
- Make the evaluation process less lengthy and burdensome.
- Revise state forms, training, evaluation etc. to make them equally applicable to programs using tutors (e.g. find ways to put tutor time and tutor recruitment time into the program statistics).
- Drop the idea of developing a model curriculum for adult education with the homeless. Aim instead to delineate curriculum guidelines.

### Recommendations To Project Lighthouse

- PL should consider expanding educational services to guests beyond the one and a half to three hours per week they currently receive. The current level of services is not adequate for meeting the range of learner goals discussed.

- PL should test and evaluate different mixes of tutoring, individual counseling and group learning activities. The program currently uses all three kinds of activities, but they are possibly not as well integrated and mutually reinforcing as they could be. The tutor/learner relationship is currently viewed as the primary vehicle for meeting a wide range of learner, tutor and program goals, while educational counseling and group learning activities are seen as adjunct. By integrating activities, homeless learners could have available to them a variety of supportive and stimulating learning relationships: with a tutor, with a teacher, with peer learners, with a support group, with a counselor.

- PL should examine ways to provide better assistance to its coordinators with logistical tasks like volunteer recruitment, program publicity and daily management. The two coordinators are both highly informed, skilled and creative in working with homeless learners; yet, at a time when there was a backlog of guests waiting to enter the program, both were required to spend a great deal of their time on support tasks rather than direct services.

- PL should follow up their excellent tutor training to monitor the extent to which behaviors, skills and attitudes towards adult education with the homeless that were modeled in training are actually being practiced. While tutor support is readily available and student journals provide information on learner progress, the "sanctity" of the tutoring relationship makes it difficult for staff to supervise the quality of that interaction. A great deal of the program's success rests on the quality of the tutor/learner relationship. While empowerment was clearly the staff's agenda, not all tutors shared this emphasis. Two of three tutors I spoke with were primarily interested in their students' "motivation to improve themselves" and a third was actually uncomfortable with the learner.

- It is critical that the LIS administration provide support for expanding tutoring and/or classes in the shelter during evening hours. Beyond agreeing to this initiative, the administration should attempt to build support for the program among frontline staff who might have concerns about it. Space and oversight are some key concerns to be resolved, and this resolution will contribute to the long-term institutionalization of PL at the shelter. Evening hours would alleviate the problem of recruiting qualified tutors, and would make it easier to recruit a mix of tutors that better reflects the racial and gender mix of shelter guests.

- LIS should consider ways to expand services to women at LIS, as well as to Woods-Mullen residents.

- The State should examine the counting and enrollment system in terms of its relevancy for programs operating in large non-residential shelters and drop-in centers such as Long Island, where guests come and go on a daily basis.

- The State Bureau of Adult Education should further study the availability and appropriateness of ABE, ESL and GED program slots in the Boston area. It is the experience of PL staff that their program often cannot effectively transition learners for two reasons:
  (1) There are very few slots, and learners often have to wait for an opening (which is particularly difficult for homeless guests, who need quick response to their initiatives for success in getting stabilized); and
  (2) They do not find many existing program with supportive, caring learning environments where homeless learners could continue to experience success as

they had in PL. (Harriet Tubman House was mention as one of the few such programs.)

- The State should find ways to support PL's efforts to document and disseminate a number of successful aspects of its work:
  (1) Tutor/teacher training approach that integrates information on homelessness and examination of preconceptions about the homeless with practice in educational skills;
  (2) Pilot use of Rosenberg Self-Esteem Test with program participants to measure progress in that critical area;
  (3) Use of learning journals as vehicles for venting and self-expression; and
  (4) Coordinators' holistic view of what "adult education with the homeless" means, and what constitutes "positive outcomes" for participants in this effort.

**Evaluation Completed by:** Mary Jo Connelly

**Date of Site Visit**: May 2 and May 3, 1990

# OPERATION BOOTSTRAP/ LYNN SHELTER ASSOCIATION

## STATISTICAL PROFILE

*"I like my program because it gives me a better chance to learn more. And after I get my GED, I would like to take a course in recordkeeping and accounting."*

Demographics: N = 2

Two of the learners in the Operation Bootstrap/Lynn Shelter Association program responded to the survey. However, the two respondents presented different characteristics.

Both learners surveyed were females with children. One learner was a divorced, white female over 36 years of age, who had lived in Massachusetts for over 10 years. She reported living in a hotel/motel for the past six months and was currently living in a shelter. This was her first use of a shelter.

The other learner was a single, Hispanic female between the ages of 26 and 35. She had lived in Massachusetts for over one year, and Spanish was her language most frequently spoken. She reported living in her apartment the last six months and was currently living in a shelter. This was her first use of a shelter.

Both reported leaving their last permanent home due to eviction. The learners were currently receiving AFDC, WIC, and Medicaid. Both had worked in the past and were not currently looking for work.

Education

The learners reported that this was their first time in the program and that they had been in the program one to three weeks. One had been in an adult education program previously.

The learners found out about the program from shelter counselors and enrolled to get a GED. The learners indicated that they were getting what they expected from the program, did not want to make any changes and indicated that they especially liked the teacher because "he gives us energy to succeed."

The learners indicated that they were studying reading, writing, math, and for the GED. They felt that they had changed in that they are exicted and want to learn more, can ask for help, are not embarrassed by what they do not know and feel they have control over the future.

Both learners indicated that they like having the class as part of the shelter and would like to continue in a GED class after they leave the shelter.

# PROGRAM PROFILE

Note: The following program profile was composed with data collected on two site visit days-- June 19 and July 9. During this period, the program was suffering the loss of a teacher who had been with the program for over a year, and whose personal style raised many concerns about appropriate boundaries between education staff and shelter guests. The following profile strongly reflects these and related concerns, including the degree of integration between shelter and education services. If another set of site visits were made now, and another profile written, these concerns would not dominate in the same way that they did in early summer.

## I. Program Summary

### Program History and Context

Since January 1989, the Lynn Adult Education (LSA) for the Homeless Program has provided educational services on-site to more than 30 guests at three shelters: LSA's BridgeHouse, a transitional family residence; Hotel Edison, an emergency placement for families; and LSA's Emergency Shelter and Day Center for homeless individuals. Lynn Shelter Association, the program's lead agency, is a private non-profit agency and the largest shelter provider on Boston's North Shore. Its partner is Operation Bootstrap, a non-profit agency that has provided adult basic education, ESL and GED preparation to over 3,000 adults since 1979. Through this on-site education program, shelter residents have attained basic reading, writing, math and English skills, and several have passed GED tests. One participant has entered an employment training programs and several have transferred to other education programs: one to Bootstrap, one to an intensive ESL program and one teenager back to high school. The Hotel Edison program component came to an end in the spring of this year, when the Department of Public Welfare stopped referring homeless families to Hotel Edison. The present profile will look at only the Emergency Shelter and BridgeHouse program components.

- Lynn Shelter Association

The Lynn Shelter Association (LSA) is dedicated to working to end homelessness; it seeks to "rebuild the individual and family from the inside to achieve independent living." Since 1984, LSA has provided more than 70,000 shelter beds to individuals and families who are "encountering acute episodes of homelessness." It served more than 1,800 guests in 1989 alone. LSA operates the only shelter services on the North Shore that are open to all homeless people, including non-residents and substance abusers. In addition to meals, shelter and housing search assistance, LSA provides a range of programs and support services to meet guests needs, including: case management, substance abuse counseling, child advocacy, health care, transportation, job search assistance, and community referrals for counseling and other services (described in detail below). LSA also works to educate the Greater Lynn community about who the homeless are, why they are homeless and what it will take to end homelessness.

LSA's services are designed to respond to the whole range of needs and concerns homeless guests bring. The agency works not only to place people in housing, but also to equip them with skills, knowledge of their rights and linkages to community resources and connections that will help them maintain stability and improve their quality of life. LSA starts from the assumption that its homeless guests are our friends, neighbors and associates, who have been "caught up in the complexities of the 20th century" and have become victims of the housing market, unemployment, substance abuse and other family tragedies. LSA staff bring compassion, hope and concern to their work with guests. They also bring a deep commitment to empowerment: advocating for guests with the various systems that have failed them, and teaching guests to understand those systems and ultimately to advocate for themselves. Along with knowledge and skills, LSA staff help guests develop the self-confidence and faith in their own capabilities that will allow them to keep going in the face of many obstacles and challenges.

Between its two sites, LSA draws on a large professional staff of 18 full-time and five part-time professional and support personnel. Twelve volunteers and representatives of other agencies also offer services to guests at BridgeHouse and the LSA Emergency Shelter. Volunteer doctors and nurses come in regularly to offer care. The shelters also make referrals to counseling, training programs, de-tox and other services. LSA also has a wide network of community agencies with which it has collaborated, including North Shore Community College Nursing Department, Atlanticare Early Childhood Program, the Visiting Nurses Association, the Lynn Community Health Center and the Salvation Army.

The Lynn Shelter Association targeted its efforts to serve two very distinct homeless populations, in facilities with very different levels of physical comfort.

- BridgeHouse

BridgeHouse is a "specialized housing program" developed by the LSA in 1988 to provide a transitional residence for 11 families. It also offers a comprehensive network of services to help homeless families achieve stability, self-sufficiency and growth. BridgeHouse's approach is very effective: of more than 60 families who have come through the shelter in two years, none have become homeless again. Its staff includes a Program Director, two Case Managers, a Child Advocate, a Housing Advocate and a Family Life Advocate. BridgeHouse has been full to capacity since it opened, and guests have been staying at BridgeHouse an average of three to four months. Their stay will likely grow longer now that housing vouchers have been limited.

Support activities for mothers at BridgeHouse include: ongoing education on budgeting, housing search and successful tenanting; Systematic Training for Effective Parenting (STEP); a 9-week course on women's health that includes birth control and sexually transmitted diseases; legal services workshops and counseling on benefits, housing and custody rights; trainings on assertiveness and dealing with abuse; information sessions on lead paint and other environmental hazards; and workshops and advocacy to help women deal with court evaluations, parent-teacher meetings and other intimidating events. Child advocacy and special children's activities such as museum trips are also offered.

The BridgeHouse facility, an elegant old 11-bedroom house, is more than comfortable. Besides sweeping stairs, marble floors and other relics of a more aristocratic past, BridgeHouse offers newly refurnished bedrooms; a TV room with cable access; a back deck; a laundry room; and a new children's playroom and library.

- Emergency Shelter and Day Center

By way of contrast, the Emergency Shelter/Day Center is located in the damp basement of a decaying City building. Space there is at a premium; cots for 40 guests line up in tight rows in two rooms, making sleeping quarters for men and women. Tables and chairs are lined up just as tightly in another room, which serves as a dining room, sitting room and central gathering point for the Day Center. The Day Center offers meals, counseling and a variety of services and activities for all homeless individuals. It also provides a safe "dry" environment for people coming out of de-tox. (The night shelter will take in active substance abusers.)

The Emergency Shelter and Day Center serve primarily single homeless teens and men. (The ratio of men to women is around 6:1.) Workshops and individual contacts there have addressed HIV, substance abuse, first aid and foot care, as well as legal rights and benefits. Weekly special events are planned for teenage guests.

Emergency Shelter and Day Center Staff include: the Associate Executive Director, who oversees shelter programming; two Case Managers, a Housing Specialist, a Counselor and several Shelter Specialists and Relief Workers. Staff have carved out two small offices and a medical examination room in the shelter space. Volunteer doctors and nurses come into the shelter regularly to provide care to guests. One office and the examination room double as classrooms.

- Operation Bootstrap

The education provider, Operation Bootstrap, is a non-profit Adult Learning Center that offers free, self-paced educational services year round to individuals 16 years or older who do not have a high school diploma. Bootstrap is centrally located in the Greater Lynn YMCA facility and is well established in the greater Lynn community. Since 1979, it has provided services to more than 3,000 adults, over 700 of whom have earned GED's. Operation Bootstrap offers tutoring in reading, math, English grammar and GED preparation. It also provides students with books and materials.

Bootstrap has collaborated with a number of local agencies to serve various disadvantaged groups. It has worked with the North Shore Employment Training on "Principles of Literacy" (PALS), and with the Lynn Public Schools on the Commonwealth Futures Program and other efforts. It collaborated with "Work Connection" to operate an on-site Workplace Literacy Program. Operation Bootstrap also offers on-site educational services for the Lynn Adult Education for the Homeless Program. It has provided the basic program format and curriculum, hired and trained teachers, and furnished books and materials.

Bootstrap's curriculum uses an individualized, competency-based approach to teaching basic reading, writing, math and GED preparation skills, (which includes advanced work in these areas, as well as social studies and science). After intake testing to determine his or her skill levels, a learner begins study with workbooks and other materials at his/her skill levels. A combination of whole language and phonics approaches are used to teach reading and grammar skills to learners with low skill levels. A "World of Work" curriculum has been developed and is available for use at 0 - 4 and 5 - 8 Basic Skills levels. General curricula in each skills area and at each level integrate a variety of workbook series, readers, drills and other materials. ESL instruction is divided into Beginning, Mid-levels 1, 2 and 3 and High Levels 1 and 2. Reading, writing, listening and speaking are integrated at all levels of instruction.

- Local Context

In 1987, Lynn was ranked second in the State for the total number of homeless families, and the problem has since been aggravated by rising rents, condominium conversions and gentrification. According to LSA's 1989 statistics, 75% of BridgeHouse guests were paying rents that exceeded 50% of their incomes. Twelve and a half percent of their guests that year lost their homes as a direct result of condominium conversion or rehabilitation.

The City of Lynn has historically not addressed homelessness or affordable housing. In addition to providing services at its own shelters, LSA has also called attention to the City's inertia and lobbied for more services. A somewhat antagonistic relationship has developed between LSA and the City, which brings its authority to bear on the agency with some regularity. When BridgeHouse wanted to move to its present location, LSA had to go through an eight-month legal battle with the City over the site. The Lynn Housing Authority, which controls all housing vouchers-- LSA guests' ticket out of the shelter-- has tried to prevent poor families from using mobile Section 8's to settle in Lynn. When the mayor's office heard that LSA had been awarded the McKinney Adult Education for the Homeless Grant, it tried to bring pressure on LSA through Bootstrap, which the City does fund.

The LSA facilities are the only shelters in Lynn that provide support and transition services as well as shelter. LSA's open door policy and extensive services are unique not only in Lynn, but also among surrounding North Shore communities. LSA ends up taking the overflow from all over the North Shore. The Emergency Shelter and BridgeHouse are the only facilities in that area that do not require residency. They are also the only ones that accept active substance abusers. When Lynn did begin channeling some funds to the homeless, it funded another facility that offers only shelter. The City also began to compete with LSA for federal funds going to the homeless, such as a 1989 McKinney grant for the Emergency Shelter that the City was awarded. (A City agency has been awarded many other poverty programs.)

## Program Vision and Goals

- Vision

LSA's empowerment focus and its commitment to responding to the whole range of needs and concerns guests bring make education a logical part of its offerings. The agency's approach to empowering homeless individuals and families is in itself educational. Shelter staff's efforts address the most fundamental "homeless education" curriculum: helping guests understand the systemic reasons for their homelessness and how to advocate with the systems that failed them; teaching them about their rights and how to exercise those rights; and facilitating their access to community resources. Both the Day Center and BridgeHouse also offer guests a variety of nontraditional learning activities such as workshops and support groups. These are tools guests can use in the service of their broader goals.

LSA staff are very supportive of offering educational services as part of their guest support system; in fact, several believe that education "should be as much a mandated shelter service as clean sheets." (LSA's Executive Director has a Master's degree in education and worked for 15 years in local schools.) LSA has identified a clear educational need: in 1989, 71% of homeless Heads of Household LSA served did not have a high school diploma and more than half were under 25 years of age. Most guests dropped out of school in the 8th-10th grade, most as pregnant teens. Staff identify education as a "priority need" for these guests.

The shelter education program was envisaged as fairly traditional and school-focused, addressing basic educational skills and GED preparation. The shelter staff intended that education would fill a clearly defined gap in the shelter's matrix of services. While classes might include exercises on budgeting, nutrition or job search skills, they were not expected to integrate information or activities on other more problematic issues surrounding homelessness, such as housing search, child custody or substance abuse. These were the province of LSA case managers and social workers.

LSA's vision of a traditional, schooling and GED-focused education program matched what Operation Bootstrap had to offer. For Bootstrap, Adult Basic Education "is reading, writing and math in a pretty traditional way. We try to offer students a positive educational experience so they feel good about themselves and see that they can go back to school in a positive way."

- Program Goals

The Lynn Shelter Association's "bottom line" for the educational program is that it should, as much as possible, link guests with viable job training and jobs that can lead to economic stability. Staff emphasize that a program like this can create opportunities and connections, but guests themselves must be able to "make the call" about whether they want to pursue education, training, or employment. LSA and Bootstrap both expect that this educational program will offer guests both practical competencies and the personal growth that comes with realizing one's capabilities. Other program goals include:

- Teaching concrete, useable skills, like filling out forms, budgeting, and making a resume;
- Emphasizing reading, math, English and other skills that will lead to a GED;
- Addressing other criteria for getting into job training programs;
- Nurturing guests' confidence, self-esteem and capacity to move forward; and
- Connecting guests with education in a positive way that may lead to college or continued education.

The Lynn program brings into focus a broader question concerning adult education initiatives with homeless individuals. An agency like LSA, which responds to guests in a holistic way, with a wide range of services and a long-term agenda of empowerment and self-reliance, offers an interesting context for examining education's role in empowerment. In a shelter program that offers so much of its own informal educational agenda, will a rather traditional, academically-focused education program complement, compete with, or undermine this empowerment agenda?

## Distinguishing Characteristics

- The lead agency in this program, the Lynn Shelter Association (LSA), brings to this project a deep and systemic understanding of the political and economic factors underlying homelessness, factors which also condition most communities' dehumanizing response to homeless individuals and families. The agency very successfully helps homeless individuals and families address the root causes of their homelessness and gain access to services and resources that will enable them to move beyond it. LSA staff see themselves as "tenacious advocates" for guests with the various systems that have failed them. One staff member said: "We all have big mouths and fat Rolodexes. We know what guests' legal rights are, and we help them use the law to get what they're entitled to." Many direct service staff at the shelter have experienced homelessness or poverty, and are very committed to this work. They offer guests very comprehensive and individualized services.

- LSA actively tries to educate the local community about homelessness and its impact on individuals and families. It has gathered a wealth of information on what kinds of people its shelter serves, and what services they need. LSA has printed brochures and booklets presenting this information in an accessible format, with illustrations and easy-to-read charts.

- LSA staff "believe in responding to people as human beings, standing on equal ground and speaking with guests. We make a connection with them." They work to enable people in a positive way, rather than rescuing people or creating dependency. Staff attempt to engage people where they are, to help them reflect on their own situation and needs. LSA tries to expand guests' range of options, and to make it possible from them to decide their course of action. The shelter has only a few rules, all pertaining directly to safety.

- The Lynn Adult Education for the Homeless (AEH) initiative has developed three components, to serve three different sites: the day drop-in center at LSA's Emergency Shelter; BridgeHouse, a residential family shelter; and Hotel Edison, a "welfare hotel" (no longer in operation). All three program components have operated on-site; and each has been geared to the specific concerns and needs of the population it serves.

- Some women come into BridgeHouse (BH), the 11-family shelter operated by LSA, because they have heard that they will be able to work on their basic skills and GED there. Some referrals BH gets from the Department of Public Welfare (DPW) and other shelters are due to the education program.

- Until the spring, this program included a unique component that reached out to "welfare hotel" residents and offered classes on-site there. This component stopped when the DPW stopped placing homeless families in that and other hotels.

- The LSA has put a great deal of emphasis on empowering guests to confront the conditions that have made them homeless. A major piece of this is dealing with the psychological trauma many homeless people undergo: anger, denial, depression, and fear. Staff regard homelessness as a tragedy, whose victims can benefit from counseling. Guests are connected with counseling services in communities where they hope to attain permanent housing.

- The Lynn program has had to deal with the issue of teachers' roles and boundaries. It is very difficult for many adult educators to teach in shelters, using learner-centered approaches, without getting involved in learners' other concerns. Two successive teachers have left the program because they crossed the agreed-upon boundaries. Partners have had to communicate very explicitly their expectations in this regard, and to develop supervisory systems that will keep the problem from recurring.

- The Lynn Adult Education for the Homeless (AEH) initiative puts a heavy emphasis on practical skills and skills leading to employment. They believe that women need to gain marketable skills to be able to afford housing. They have integrated a job search skills workshop into the educational program, and are attempting to link it with a job skills coach.

- The LSA solicits learner input into all aspects of shelter life, including the educational program. Learners have suggested using driving manuals and popular magazines as teaching materials. Their suggestions have also improved childcare.

- The BridgeHouse component of the Lynn initiative has developed a very effective childcare system. A trained, licensed childcare worker is on-site for a guaranteed number of hours each week, regardless of attendance. At the guests' suggestion, she comes into the shelter one hour before class and stays until half an hour after class. This allows children to get settled before classes start, so mothers don't get distracted as often.

- For guests who have gone from the shelter to permanent housing, one of LSA's vans is available to transport them to and from classes. Bus and subway fare is also available.

- Both partners in this project share administration and coordination duties. Administrative compensation is split roughly 60/40, with LSA assuming bookkeeping and general administration duties and the educational partner, Operation Bootstrap, assuming responsibility for hiring, training and supervising teachers, maintaining attendance records and reporting to the State funding agency.

## Program Strengths

- Empowerment Focus: In its work with guests, the Lynn Shelter Association starts from the assumption that they have been "profoundly disappointed by society, and named as victims." LSA's Assistant Director, who assumes much of the responsibility for coordinating the education program's day-to-day operation, articulated a powerful analysis of what "empowerment" means in the context of shelter work. For her and other LSA staff, working to empower homeless individuals has at least two dimensions: motivating guests to understand the roots of their immediate circumstances and to think beyond them; and helping guests to believe that "they can continue, despite what's thrown at them." For BridgeHouse residents, this approach works very well to restore systems for families. In two years of operation, not one of the families it has served has become homeless again. At the Emergency Shelter and drop-in center, it helps guests feel accepted and cared for as they confront recurring problems.

- Support Services: Both LSA shelters offer a comprehensive range of services to meet their guests' diverse needs. Because staff approach guests as whole people, they respond to a very broad range of concerns. As one staff member said, "we've taught them everything from foot care to self-defense." At each site, services reflect the needs of its specific population, as described above.

- Emphasis on Building Community: Staff at both the Emergency Shelter/Day Center and BridgeHouse work to build a trusting, supportive community where staff and residents can meet on equal ground, and where peer support can develop. Particularly at BridgeHouse, group activities are used to build community: the level of participation in house meetings, workshops and other groups is generally high. Guests seem to feel ownership for what goes on at BH, and staff solicit their input on many issues. At the Emergency Shelter, which often hosts volatile groups, the level of respect and connection is high enough that no major violence has occurred. Guests at both sites help each other with homework; shelter staff also help.

- Strong Partnership: One of this program's biggest assets is its strong and resilient partnership. Both the Lynn Shelter Association and Operation Bootstrap are committed to making this program work. The two agencies have shared elements in their approaches to disadvantaged adults: both offer self-paced, client-centered services that respect individuals' concerns and interests. They both undertook this program with the full backing of their Boards. Both agencies also have considerable experience operating collaborative programs with other agencies. From the beginning of this program, the partners also set up a pattern of regular communication at the administrative level as well as between the frontline teachers and caseworkers. In one and a half years of collaboration, the partners have come to understand and respect each other.

  In this period, they have also overcome a number of obstacles:

  - The partnership was challenged at the outset by inquiries from the City of Lynn; while the City funds Bootstrap, it usually meets up with LSA as a political or legal opponent.
  - After only a few months, the program had to redefine its transition goal and, consequently, its program operation. Initially, LSA and Bootstrap wanted to transition guests out of the shelter class and into Bootstrap-- with childcare, transport and ongoing support-- at the 60 day point, while they were still living in the shelter, but guests were generally more comfortable at the shelter sites. Although Bootstrap would have offered other advantages, shelter classes smaller numbers made it possible for teachers to offer students more attention there. The familiar environment also made it easier for peer support to develop. Instead of pushing participants to accept the "plan," Lynn partners understood that guests already had too many transitions in their lives and accepted that the program should be flexible and meet participants' needs.
  - Finally, teacher turnover and the need to let one teacher go might have stretched another partnership to the breaking point. The Bootstrap Director's extraordinary efforts at these points-- intervening with teachers, finding substitutes and even substituting herself, and conducting searches for new permanent teachers-- made it possible for the program to weather these crises.

- Local Political Climate: In its efforts to provide humane, empowering assistance to the homeless in Lynn, the LSA is not only alone but also often under siege. LSA has weathered a series of political and legal battles with the City, including battles over the family shelter site, over funding and over housing vouchers. The agency has come out of these intact, but in an embattled stance. LSA engages City authorities at several levels. Staff use their understanding of legal rights and benefit systems to advocate on behalf of homeless individuals and families. LSA has also used its organizational resources to lobby for increased funding and expanded services to address homelessness and housing issues. Finally, LSA has worked to educate Lynn citizens about these issues and to mobilize them on behalf of homeless services and affordable housing.

- Eligibility and Length of Services: LSA has few eligibility criteria for guests, and its broad willingness to serve all the homeless carries over to its educational program. The Emergency Shelter is the only North Shore shelter that doesn't require its guests to prove residency. The shelter accepts substance abusers, although the drop-in center is dry. The educational program serves all BridgeHouse residents and Day Shelter guests 16 years or older who have no high school diploma or GED, or who have a diploma/GED but function below a 9th grade level. The program has encountered only one learner with learning problems severe enough that they referred her to a specialized program. ESL students are welcome in the shelter program, although guests who seek more intensive ESL study can also be referred elsewhere.

Guests can stay at BridgeHouse, a transitional shelter, as long as they are working on an identified goal. Emergency Shelter guests can stay up to 90 days. All participants in the education program have the option to stay with the program after they leave the shelter, or to make the transition to Operation Bootstrap's regular program. The Lynn program serves a number of Latina and African-American clients. Both shelters can accommodate Spanish- speaking guests.

- Flexible Scheduling and Expectations: The Lynn program has scheduled classes at both sites to accommodate guests' schedules. Particularly at BridgeHouse, many other activities compete with classes for guests' time and attention. The DPW expects that guests there will spend two to three hours each day on housing search; they also have appointments with other agencies and services, doctors' appointments and demands from children. This program offers learners the opportunity for a significant number of contact hours: nine hours per week at each site.

  While both shelter and educational staff put a great deal of energy in to motivating guests, they don't have rigid ideas about what it means for a guest to be "motivated" or to be "trying." Staff recognize that showing up and making any kind of effort to learn is a lot for people facing so many other problems. They are particularly aware that for many Emergency Shelter guests, it takes a lot to shift their focus from immediate gratification to working towards future goals.

- Broad and Long-Range View of Positive Outcomes: Shelter and educational staff have a very long-term view of what "positive outcomes" will be. Given the short period of contact they usually have with learners, it is not expected that this program will yield many completed GED's or enrollments in higher education and training programs. The staff have, however, identified a number of ways in which this program has had a positive impact on both the individual participants and the shelter as a whole.

  The education program has been helpful to learners:
  - For housing search, by lending credibility;
  - For getting their kids back, demonstrating commitment;
  - For building self-esteem and a sense of accomplishment;
  - For creating new opportunities and choices, including bridges to higher education and training; and
  - For motivating their kids to stay in or return to school.

  The education program has been helpful to the shelter:
  - For building staff morale, confirming that "they're a program with a forward vision, not just a shelter;"
  - For bringing in referrals of guests who want to work on education;
  - For offering the community a different perspective on what services to the homeless can be about; and
  - For legitimating much of and extending an empowerment/advocacy approach to working with the homeless.

- Linkages with Community Resources: For LSA, helping guests build a strong support network goes beyond connecting them with social services and community agencies. LSA also puts guests in touch with supportive community and student groups. For example, North Shore Community College student volunteers come into the shelter, including several women who have themselves gotten off welfare and can serve as role models.

Boston College student activists sponsor a number of activities, including outings for children living in the shelter. LSA's former guests are another resource: a recent "Alumnae Barbecue" was attended by 60-70 former guests.

- Using Educational Materials of Interest to Learners: During the last teacher's tenure (he was with the program until May), the educational program incorporated materials of interest to students. Several students used the Bible and others used newspaper articles and popular magazines to practice reading skills. At the a learner's suggestion, the teacher developed lessons from the driving manual. He also used "language experience stories," where events in students' lives were written down and became learning materials. (Note: Two new teachers hired to replace this one began work in late June. The evaluator was able to visit with one of them, at BridgeHouse, in early July. It appeared that she had not yet begun to incorporate such a variety of materials.)

- Teacher Orientation and In-Service Training: Before starting to teach in this program, all teachers have spent time with shelter staff getting oriented to the shelter's mission, guests' concerns, and the environment in which they live and learn. Second interviews for teachers hired in June took place at the shelter; they spoke with shelter staff about program history and expectations for the teacher's role.

  The Lynn program's last teacher participated actively in the statewide program's teacher's network. He also visited another program to observe that program. Homeless program teachers participate in Operation Bootstrap's regular teacher in-service training, which is connected to the State SABES system. Recent topics have included "What is the Whole Language Approach?" and "Reading from Scratch."

- Follow-Up and Transition Services: This program will continue to enroll and support participants after they leave the shelter. They have the option of continuing with classes at the shelter site or moving into Operation Bootstrap. In either case, the homeless program will provide transportation to and from programs; LSA has vans and cars that are available. All sites are also near bus or subway stops, and funds are available to pay fares. Daycare will also be continued as needed. The LSA's one year follow-up and stabilization program provides a framework for maintaining contact with learners who choose to take a break from the program when they move into permanent housing. Four cases of "transition" were discussed: one guest transferred to Bootstrap and got a GED (she also brought her sister in); one guest moved to another shelter but was allowed to continue in the program; one guest was referred to a training program; and one woman is "on break" while settling into a new apartment, but intends to continue.

## Concerns and Tensions

- Counterproductive State Policies: This program battles not only restrictions imposed by the City ( See Local Political Climate in :"Strengths"), but also State policies that undermine its longer-term empowerment efforts. One staff member commented that:

  > "There's such a lack of communication on the State level between agencies whose policies affect the homeless. They expect us to take rules for WIC, Food Stamps, Department of Social Services, Department of Public Welfare, and to put them together with Krazy Glue, and these rules are always changing. The recent changes have taken away most of our tools for motivating people and moving them ahead."

In the face of rapidly changing policies, shelter staff try to reassure families, to keep their faith when the agencies are letting them down. Shelter residents currently see little prospect for permanent housing. The State budget crisis cut off housing vouchers; at BridgeHouse, five families had vouchers taken out of their hands after they had been awarded. The DPW also stopped placing families in the Hotel Edison, from which many guests used to transition to BridgeHouse. Families for whom Edison represented a first step back to stability and permanent housing now don't even get on that road. In this climate, homeless learners face an indefinite stay in the shelter. In these circumstances, it might become harder for some learners to see what will come from going to classes day after day because the real benefit is part of distant, unforseen future.

- Integration of Education with Shelter Services: This program has a "schooling-based" concept of what education should be and how it can be empowering. Bootstrap's Director stated that "our single purpose is to provide ABE and ESL. We provide reading, writing and math in a pretty traditional way." The LSA Director and Assistant Director view the education program as primarily a way to offer guests practical skills and to link them with job training and employment opportunities. Both partners emphasize the importance of focusing classroom activities on traditional reading, writing and math subjects, rather than attempting to integrate information and concerns from some of the shelters' less traditional learning activities (workshops on health, parenting, substance abuse, housing, etc.).

Yet, particularly with LSA's empowerment focus, this program has the potential to empower homeless adults through the learning process itself, in addition to what skills and credentials can offer. (In such a short period of contact, only a few learners will be able to attain GED's or break into the training or higher education system, in any case.) Both partners are very aware of the importance of creating a positive experience for learners that makes them feel good about themselves and about school, to see that they do not have to repeat school failures. This experience of overcoming failure and learning to believe in one's own capabilities could, however, have an even more profound impact on homeless learners if it were directly connected with problems and failures they confront in other areas of their lives.

LSA staff have a very holistic approach to assisting homeless guests. Staff attempt to respond to the whole range of concerns, needs and interests guests bring, and they do this extraordinarily well. Yet, in the context of this holistic approach, the education component feels compartmentalized, more like a separate service than a well integrated part of LSA shelter life and services. Rather than starting from a broad question about education's role in empowerment, the Lynn program was created to fill a rather specific gap in the matrix of shelter services: to respond to guests' need for skills, credentials and bridges to jobs and training.

Instead of looking at how classroom activities could work hand-in-hand with other services, the Lynn program has somewhat narrowly defined what are appropriate roles for teachers and for educational services. Instead of moving towards an integration of services around guests' multiple concerns, the program appears to be moving towards a more territorial definition of "educational" and "shelter program" boundaries. As a result, this program has stayed outside of LSA's generally very holistic approach to providing services. On a more pragmatic level, if classroom and support activities were more integrated, much of the counseling, support and pre-vocational advising this program offers to learners could be counted as part of the educational services this program provides.

- Role and Boundary Issues for Teachers and Shelter Staff: Concerns discussed above have led to, and been aggravated by, conflicts over program teachers' roles and boundaries conflicts with shelter staff roles. Two successive teachers have had to leave the program because of "over involvement" with learners; both Bootstrap and LSA agree that these teachers had "stepped over the line." Shelter staff spoke of the risks of teacher "over involvement." If the teacher gives learners conflicting advice on a problem, like substance abuse or child custody, it can undo months of work. It also sets up shelter staff as the "bad guy," against the "good guy" teacher who is backing up the guest.

  Faced with a violation of appropriate boundaries by one teacher in particular, the program's solution appears to be to draw clear lines, to delineate a separate identity for teachers, and to set up a system to monitor teachers. Partners have articulated clearly what teacher roles in this program do and do not include. Teachers are expected to: keep the focus on subject matter; avoid discussing or offering opinions on other issues learners are dealing with; and refer all non-academic issues and problems to the learner's case manager; and not to "fraternize" with learners outside of the classroom. At the same time, teachers are expected to be empathic, to understand and acknowledge the multiple problems homeless learners confront. They are expected to work in the shelter, in the midst of all that goes on there, yet not get involved in trying to help learners resolve problems beyond those found in math and grammar texts.

  This is a difficult balancing act for adult educators who have been trained to be learner-centered and responsive-- a balancing act which ultimately disempowers teachers, thereby limiting the education program's potential to empower learners. A case management system is already in place at LSA to negotiate the different interests and approaches of seven different agencies. Although LSA and Bootstrap have different styles and constraints, they have developed a strong partnership to build on. It is hard to understand, then, why these concerns about integration of services are not addressed more rigorously. If staff's different agency affiliations, different professions or different personal experiences and levels of schooling impede this effort, then these issues, too, should be addressed.

- Group and Individual Learning Activities: LSA successfully uses group activities to generate participation, ownership and peer learning in many aspects of its programming. This creates a climate where group activities could be used in the classroom more than they appear to be. (In the BridgeHouse class observed, one-on-one instruction was the primary mode.)

- Site Problems: Education programs at both sites do very well with the space and resources they have; yet, a few problems persist. BridgeHouse holds classes in the TV room, and learners are distracted by a lot of noise that seeps in from the hallway and playroom. The teacher and learners have tried to post signs and make announcements to keep noise down, but this hasn't worked. Children's noise will diminish when the basement playroom is completed. The LSA Director also hopes to set up individual learning stations at BridgeHouse.

  At the Emergency Shelter, the need to double up on space makes it hard to find a space for classes of more than one or two learners. There is also no spot that can be identified by posters, books or other equipment as a "learning place," even if part-time.

- Enrollment, Retention and Outreach: Both partners feel that the education program had lower enrollment and retention levels than it should as a second-year program. In late June, at the time of the evaluation visit, the program enrolled six learners at the BridgeHouse site and three at the Emergency Shelter. About half of these were attending regularly. The elimination of Hotel Edison as a program site contributed to the reduction in enrollments. A break in services after the second teacher left may have aggravated this. Population swings at the Emergency Shelter, especially in winter, when it serves guests from all over the North Shore, also make it hard to retain students.

In the first quarter of the second year– before the change in teachers– 9 of 17 enrolled learners left the program. Only three of these learners left the program to go on to other education or training programs. Although one guest was permitted to continue classes after she moved from LSA to another shelter, it has not done outreach to bring guests from other shelters into the educational program.

- Organizational Structure: The program would benefit from clarifying its organizational structure for coordination and information flow. At the direct service level, although case managers and teachers may talk, there is no formal process for sharing information or coordinating efforts.

  At the administrative level, the Bootstrap Director ends up communicating with three levels of LSA administrators– a complicated chain that puts a lot of extra pressure on the non-lead agency. On programmatic issues, she works with the Assistant Executive Director (located at the Emergency Shelter, but with responsibilities for both programs) and the BridgeHouse Director who manages the staff at that site and has regular contact with the teacher and guests there. For fiscal concerns and big decision, she communicates with LSA's Executive Director as well.

  The current division of responsibilities has required that Bootstrap be especially flexible in responding to program shifts and crises. Keeping classes in the shelters (instead of transitioning guests after six months) and recruiting, hiring and training four teachers in two years has been more costly for Bootstrap than for LSA.

- Different Relationships with Funding Agency: Although not the lead agency, Bootstrap has also assumed much of the responsibility for liaison with the State funding agency. Several factors contribute to this. First, much of the required reporting focuses on educational issues and outcomes; it seems logical for the education provider to address these. Further, as an agency Bootstrap is much more familiar with the State Department of Education than LSA is; Bootstrap depends on DOE for a large portion of its funds, while LSA has not had on ongoing relationship with that agency. Bootstrap also values the level of trust and honesty it has established with the DOE over the years, and prefers to be open with DOE about what is happening with this program. LSA, on the other hand, generally has to battle with the State to get what its guests need; in this context, it is risky to expect the funding agency to be understanding and helpful.

# II. Program Design and Implementation

## Educational Services

- Schedule of Activities

The Lynn program offers a significant number of instructional hours, nine hours per week, at each site. Classes are held at BridgeHouse from 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. on Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. An instructor works with Day Center guests from 1:00 - 4:00 p.m. on the same days.

- Eligibility, Recruitment and Outreach

### Eligibility

All guests at BridgeHouse and the Day Shelter who are 16 years or older and who have no high school diploma or GED or who have a diploma/GED but function below a 9th grade level, are eligible to participate in this program. This program has no difficulty serving guests with very low skill levels. So far only one participant has been referred to a specialized program because of learning disabilities. ESL students are also welcome in the shelter program, although guests who seek more intensive ESL study can also be referred elsewhere.

LSA's open entry policy at the Emergency Shelter assures that homeless individuals are not restricted by residency, sobriety or other requirements from entering this program.

### Recruitment and Outreach

Shelter staff make announcements about the educational program at BridgeHouse meetings; recruitment also happens by word of mouth there. Some guests even enter BridgeHouse because they know they will be able to work on education while living there. BH gets referrals from the Department of Public Welfare (DPW) and other shelters seeking to place guests in BH for this reason.

Staff at both shelters also identify potential participants through intake procedures and daily contacts. Guests also see teachers on-site. When a guest is interested in the program, his or her case managers will set up an informal three-way talk with the teacher, to break the ice. Staff emphasized the importance of making such contacts comfortable, "real" and non-threatening: "In and hour or two, we establish a caring connection with a guest."

Enrollment in the education program is strictly voluntary. The BridgeHouse Director cautioned that she sometimes has to curb staff's enthusiasm, to keep them from pushing guests to enroll simply because the program is on-site. At the Emergency Shelter, staff recognize the importance of "tuning in" to guests' motivation and helping the disenchanted get interested in education. It is harder to motivate many single guests to stay in one place and develop a regular routine of coming to class.

- Enrollment and Retention

### Intake

A teacher will complete program enrollment forms for any guest who decides to enroll in the education program after he or she has met with the case manager and teacher. The teacher will then administer a diagnostic test to the guest; the Test for Adult Basic Education (TABE) is used to assess reading and math skills. Several other standardized tests, including the San Diego Word Recognition Test and the Slossen Oral Reading Test, are also used with some students. Students with higher level skills also take GED predictor tests. No standard ESL test has been identified. Once a learner's skill level has been identified through testing, the teacher will get him or her started working with appropriate books and workbooks. Once they have gone through intake forms and testing, guests are enrolled in the program.

### Enrollment

In late June, at the time of the evaluation visit, the program enrolled six learners at the BridgeHouse site and three at the Emergency Shelter. About half of these were attending regularly. Between january and September 1989, the program enrolled 36 learners; between October and December, it enrolled 15; and it enrolled another 17 between January and March 1990. Several factors limited enrollment, the Hotel Edison closing and a break in services at the teacher's departure, in particular.

### Retention

In the first quarter of its second year, 9 of 17 enrolled learners left the program. All of those who left did so after 12 hours in the program. Only three of these learners left to go on to other education or training programs; one took a break to get settled in permanent housing, with the intention of returning. It is especially difficult to retain learners at the Emergency Shelter/Day Center. As one staff observed: "You can work two weeks to build support and make the guy feel safe, and he will disappear or take a job." These guests are more mobile than homeless families, and more hooked into a rhythm of seeking immediate gratification. Population swings at the Emergency Shelter, especially in winter, when it serves guests from all over the North Shore, also make it hard to retain students there.

- Learning Activities, Curriculum and Environments

### Learning Activities, Curriculum and Materials

The shelter education program offers individualized, competency-based instruction in reading, writing, math, English and GED preparation. A variety of workbook series, readers, drills and other materials are included in each skills area curriculum. ESL instruction integrates reading, writing, listening and speaking at all levels of instruction. During the last teacher's tenure, basic skills were supplemented by a series of "Job Search Skills Workshops," exercises on budgeting or nutrition, and materials from the "World of Work" curriculum. Various local agencies, like the community college and the Education Opportunity Center also made presentations to the classes.

While one new teacher observed during the evaluation visit relied on workbook series, the previous teacher built some lessons around materials of interest to students. Students used the Bible, newspaper articles, popular magazines and the driver's manual to practice reading skills. (Two participants recently obtained driver's licenses.) "Language experience stories," recording events in students' lives, also became learning materials.

**Learning Environments**

The Lynn shelter education program strives to create a comfortable, low-anxiety learning environment where students can overcome their generally negative feelings about school. Staff observe that many BridgeHouse guests left school as pregnant teens; they "were humiliated by the system." Teachers attempt to respect the fact that they are in guests' homes. At BridgeHouse, classes are held in a comfortable TV room. In the Emergency Shelter, two offices serve as classrooms. Because both classes are held on-site in the shelters, they benefit from the shelters' supportive climate. Yet, one-on-one learning predominates in the classroom. It does not attempt to build on the shelter's practice of using group activities to develop peer support and ownership. Both learning sites work to overcome a high level of noise and distractions outside and inside the class. Teachers find that they need to put limits on conversation.

- Student Assessment

No testing is done after intake, except for students who are preparing to take GED tests. No alternate assessments or instruments have been developed.

- Teacher Selection, Training and Support

Bootstrap coordinates teacher selection, training and support for this program, with input from shelter administrators. Teachers are chosen for their teaching competency and their comfort with working in the shelter. Before they begin teaching, teachers have orientation sessions at both the shelter and at Bootstrap. Bootstrap's Director offers an extra measure of support to shelter teachers, both because they work off-site, in isolation from other teachers, and because they have to deal with a lot of unusual events at the shelter.

As this report discussed above under "Concerns and Tensions," the Lynn program has struggled with issues surrounding teacher roles. Its solution has been to draw clear lines, to delineate a separate identity for teachers, and to set up a system of controls to monitor teachers. Partners have articulated clearly what teacher roles in this program do and do not include. In general, teachers are expected to keep the classroom focus on academic subject matter, and not to get involved in trying to help learners resolve problems beyond those found in math and grammar texts. The conflicts this creates for teachers and for the program have been discussed above.

- Outcomes

Partners in this program have identified positive impacts this program has had on both individual participants and the shelter as a whole. The education program has been helpful to learners in housing search and child custody efforts. It has also built self-esteem and a sense of accomplishment. It has created new opportunities and choices for women-- including education and training options-- and has motivated guests' children to continue schooling. Specific "success stories" include: two guests who have attained GED's and one who has entered an employment training program; two students who have passed driver's exams; and one teenager who has returned to high school.

The education program helped the shelter build staff morale and offer the community a different perspective on what services to the homeless can be about. It has also brought in guests referred specifically because of the education program.

## Program Organization

- Partnership

This program has developed a strong partnership that has withstood a variety of tests. The partnership is built on a mutual respect and a shared commitment to "making it work" in the service of meeting guests' needs. Both agencies had prior experience with interagency collaborations. Partners have been flexible enough to redefine the program's transition goal, hence its overall program design. They have also survived concerns over roles and behaviors, resulting in two teachers leaving the program in less than a year and a half.

Frequent communication between the Bootstrap Director and LSA's Assistant Director on programmatic issues has facilitated partnership. Both agency directors meet or confer by phone at least one each month on overall program operation, finances, problems and new ideas.

- Coordination and Management

### Joint Coordination

There is no coordinator for the Lynn Adult Education for the Homeless Program; both partners share administration and coordination duties. The lead agency, LSA, has assumed bookkeeping and general administrative duties, while Operation Bootstrap, the educational partner, took on responsibility for hiring, training and supervising teachers, maintaining attendance records and reporting to the State funding agency. Through commitment and flexibility, partners have made this arrangement work for over a year and a half, but it has been costly. Both agencies, and Bootstrap in particular, have invested considerable administrative time beyond that for which they have been compensated. Administrative compensation is split roughly 60/40 between the two agencies.

### Information Flow and Decision Making

Coordination procedures and information flow are unclear at all program levels. At the direct service level, although case managers and teachers talk, there is no formal process for sharing information or coordinating efforts. At the administrative level, the Bootstrap Director ends up communicating with three levels of LSA administrators (the Executive Director, the Assistant Executive Director and the BridgeHouse Director). The fact that the Assistant Director managed BridgeHouse for four months helps, since she has a good understanding of guests and concerns there.

Program decisions are made by the LSA and Bootstrap Directors, with input from LSA's Assistant Director, BridgeHouse's Director, teachers, other staff and learners. LSA, in particular, seeks client input into shelter and program decisions. Both the LSA and Bootstrap boards have lent their support to this program.

**Liaison with Funding Agency**

Although not the lead agency, Bootstrap has also assumed much of the responsibility for liaison with the State funding agency, with which it has a longer history than LSA does.

- Support Services

This program brings together a particularly rich array of support services. Both LSA shelters offer a comprehensive range of services to meet their guests' diverse needs and concerns. LSA particularly encourages guests to connect with counseling services. Besides in-house workshops and individualized supports, LSA shelters make referrals to a wide array of community agencies and resources.

The BridgeHouse program has evolved a very effective childcare system. A trained, licensed childcare worker is on-site for a guaranteed number of hours each week, regardless of attendance. At the guests' suggestion, she comes into the shelter one hour before class and stays until half an hour after class.

LSA offers transportation by van, car or paid public transport that allows guests who have moved to permanent housing to continue attending classes at the shelters. Childcare is also available to these guests.

- Incentives and Barriers to Participation

**Incentives**

These include: the opportunity to work on-site towards gaining academic skills or attaining a GED while living in the shelter; the chance to do something to move forward and take some control of one's life, during a period when most other avenues are closed; and the chance to link up through this program with job training or further education.

**Barriers**

Schedule conflicts are a major problem for program participants at the BridgeHouse program. Even though classes have been scheduled to accommodate learners, homeless mothers often miss class due to children's illness or appointments with doctors, teachers and social service agencies. Guests are also expected to spend two to three hours each day on housing search. Homeless women are "subject to multitudes of expectations from multiple agencies," which makes homelessness a "50 or 60 hour a week job." Frustrations from long waits for housing vouchers also make it difficult to commit to learning. Guests at the Emergency Shelter face the lure of the road and of more immediate rewards than classes offer. Finally, participants at both sites cope with noisy and distracting learning conditions that are far from ideal.

- Transition and Follow-Up

Participants who have moved out of LSA shelters have the option to continue classes either at one of the shelter sites or at Operation Bootstrap. The program will continue to enroll and support participants after they leave the shelter, and will provide transportation and childcare. The LSA's one year follow-up and stabilization program provides a framework for maintaining contact with learners who choose to take a break from the program when they move into permanent housing. One staff person at each shelter is responsible for follow-up contact.

- Program Assessment

Partners did use the first-year program evaluation to assess and plan for the education program. The quarterly report provides another assessment mechanism.

- Expansion and Innovation of Services

The lead agency had no suggestion for innovation or expansion. The education partner suggested that the program re-assess its transition plan and consider whether it might not be more effective to begin transitioning homeless learners to Operation Bootstrap at some point, as originally planned. They might consider what timing would be best, and what kinds of support services would need to be provided.

The Lynn partners each had one concern regarding the State level initiative. One expressed concern that the mentoring program, intended to link new and old programs, had not ever gotten off the ground. The other offered the hope that "people would soon begin telling the truth at statewide meetings-- talking about what really happens in their programs! Teachers get together for problem-solving and honest sharing, but we administrators never get to that level."

## III. RECOMMENDATIONS

- Local Political Climate: In developing education programs for the homeless, the State funding agency should consider the historical role of different local authorities and agencies. It should reflect critically on the role local authorities have played in supporting or constraining efforts to offer services to the homeless, and any implications that holds for the present initiative.

- Counterproductive State Policies: State agencies whose policies have a direct impact on homeless individuals and families should attempt to coordinate policy to avoid issuing conflicting edicts. Further, agencies like DPW and DPH should be held accountable by citizens for the long-term impact of their policies on the de-stabilization or re-stabilization of homeless individuals and families. It is particularly critical that this long-term accountability be addressed now, when so many State policies are driven by the demands of the fiscal crisis and the survival needs of individual agencies. In the absence of this coordinated, longer-term perspective on delivering services to disadvantaged and homeless people, those very people will continue to be "hurt as badly by State agencies as by their life struggles" (a comment from an LSA staff worker). Education with the homeless will be nothing more than exercise in fruitlessly raising people's hopes and expectations, without being prepared to offer them concrete opportunities and resources.

- Integration of Education with Shelter Services: The Lynn Adult Education for the Homeless Program should consider whether integrating education more with other shelter services, rather than attempting to fix boundaries between them, might not better serve its mission of dealing with guests as whole people and of empowering them. As part of that integration, the Lynn program should consider how it might better integrate information and concerns from the shelter's less traditional learning activities (such as housing, health, budgeting, parenting and substance abuse workshops) into reading, writing and math activities. The program has made some attempts to use materials and activities that addresses learners' concerns and life situations, for example the driver's manual. If the program builds on these attempts, it may prove more effective for both motivating learners and developing their skills, since adults generally learn faster and retain longer that which is directly relevant to their lives.

- Role and Boundary Issues for Teachers and Shelter Staff: The recommendations under three and four are contingent on a shift in how this program defines teachers' roles and in the kinds of boundaries it establishes between their roles and shelter staff roles. The current approach to circumscribing teachers' roles is disempowering for teachers and limiting for the program. A strong partnership like this should find a process for educating teachers and shelter workers about each others' roles and for harmonizing their efforts on behalf of guests. With information flowing in both directions, shelter staff who have a strong concern about empowerment, and/or personal experience of what it takes for a person to become empowered, could have input into the education program.

  This is not to suggest that teacher's roles are identical to those of a case manager or social worker. Teachers would clearly be acting irresponsibly to take on the role of advising guests on problems where they aren't familiar with the entire history, where their recommendations might contradict shelter staff, or for which they cannot offer resources or services. On the other hand, when a teacher is part of a "team effort" and is aware of the various problems a guest confronts as well the rationale and strategy behind services, she or he can work in support of other staff efforts. The case management system, already in place at BridgeHouse and the Emergency Shelter, offers an appropriate vehicle for coordinating services to guests.

- Group and Individual Learning Activities: The educational program could do more to build on LSA's successful use of group learning activities. Integrating group activities with one-on-one learning offers the opportunities for guests to learn for each other and to validate their knowledge. It also develops a peer support network that could continue beyond the shelter.

- Enrollment, Retention and Outreach: The Lynn program might consider whether there are strategies beyond what it is already doing that might improve learner retention. It might also consider whether it wishes to improve enrollments and more fully utilize existing resources by accepting referrals from other local shelters.

- Organizational Structure: The program should consider whether Bootstrap should assume the role of lead agency for this grant, in view of its better established relationship to the funding agency and its pattern of handling liaison and reporting.

- Coordination and Information Flow: This partnership should consider how to formalize and rationalize coordination at both the direct service and administrative levels. As discussed, after intake there is no formal mechanism– meeting schedule, goal-setting form, progress report, etc– whereby teachers and case managers communicate about services to guests. At the administrative level, Bootstrap ends up communicating with three levels of LSA administrators for different types of issues. The current division of labor has left Bootstrap with primary responsibility for implementing some joint decisions like firing and supervising teachers.

**Evaluation Completed by:** Mary Jo Connelly

**Date of Site Visit:** June 19 and July 9, 1990

**Program Profile Amended by Laura Sperazi: September 24, 1990.**

# SHELTER EDUCATION PROGRAM

# THE LITERACY PROJECT, INC. AND VALLEY PROGRAMS' GREENFIELD FAMILY INN & ORANGE/ATHOL FAMILY INN

# STATISTICAL PROFILE

*"The shelter I was accepted at helped me change my life, if it weren't available, I hate to think of what my life would be like. Without this educational program I would find it very difficult to crawl out of the welfare pit. I hope to become one person that can make a difference for myself, my children, and anyone I can offer help to along the way. Thank you sincerely."*

Demographics: N = 5

All of the learners surveyed in the Literacy Project/Athol-Orange Family Inns program were females with children. Eighty percent were ages 21-35. The majority were white and reported being married or separated. All of the learners indicated that they spoke English most frequently. Sixty percent of those surveyed had lived in Massachusetts over 10 years.

Eighty percent of those surveyed indicated that they had slept in their own apartment the past 6 months and were now living in their own apartment. Reasons for leaving their last permanent home were: financial, eviction, relocation, and family problems.

The majority of those who responded indicated that they were receiving public assistance including AFDC, Medicaid, and food stamps. Twenty percent indicated that they were working part-time and 80% indicated that they had worked in the past. Less than half indicated that they were currently looking for work and would like assistance in looking for work.

Education

All respondents had completed at least 10 grades of school. Eighty percent indicated that they had been in adult education before. The majority reported that this was their first time in the program and the majority of learners had been in the program 12 weeks or longer. The majority found out about the program through a shelter counselor.

The majority of those interviewed stated that they enrolled in the program to get a GED, help kids with school, and "better myself in general". Learners indicated that they liked the teacher and the books being used.

All of those interviewed said that the program was giving them what they expected and that they expected more education and smaller classes. The majority indicated that they were studying for the GED.

All of those interviewed indicated that they felt they had changed. Learners felt they had more control over the future, were not embarrassed by what they do not know, had more self-confidence and were excited about learning and wanted to learn more.

The majority liked having classes as part of the shelter, but over half indicated that it was difficult to come to the program sometimes. The most frequent reason why was transportation. All of the respondents indicated that they would like to continue taking classes after they leave the shelter and that support from teachers and friends, transportation and good daycare would help. Learners indicated that they would like to take an ABE class and job training classes. Sixty percent indicated that they would like to go to college.

# PROGRAM PROFILE

## I. Program Summary

### Program History and Context

The Shelter Education Program is a collaboration between The Literacy Project, Inc., the Greenfield Family Inn and the Orange/Athol Family Inn; both family shelters are operated by the same non-profit agency, Valley Programs, Inc. Since January 1989, the Shelter Education Program has been funded by a McKinney grant to provide educational services to residents of these two shelters. The project has made it possible for residents of the Family Inns in Greenfield and Orange to enter The Literacy Project's ongoing education programs in those two towns. In the project's first year, 20 homeless learners were served. By May 1990, three first-year learners were still enrolled, and nine new learners had come into the program.

A third shelter, the New England Learning Center for Women in Transition (NELCWIT), dropped out of the partnership in its second year. NELCWIT, a shelter that primarily serves women fleeing battering, found that its guests had other priority concerns, and many could not risk being identified at a community learning program.

- The Literacy Project

  The lead agency in this effort is The Literacy Project (TLP), an independent non-profit adult education center that has provided adult literacy, basic education and GED instruction to residents of two rural western Massachusetts counties since 1984. The Literacy Project is a community agency in the broadest sense: it has worked hard to understand and respond to the particular needs of adult learners in Greenfield, Orange (North Quabbin), Ware and Northampton, the four communities where it operates learning centers. Learning Centers offer individualized instruction in a group setting on a year-round, open entry/open exit model. TLP has confronted the challenges of poverty, distance, poor transportation and historically low regard for schooling that make it difficult to re-connect adults in small, rural towns like these with learning opportunities. In six years, TLP has served more than 900 adult learners, 70-80% of whom have stayed enrolled or achieved their goals. For two years, it has been cited by the Association for Community Based Education as one of ten exemplary programs in the nation.

  The Literacy Project is well-known for a "whole language" approach to instruction, and for its emphasis on developing learners' self-esteem and control over their lives. A "whole language" approach treats learning to read like language learning: instead of expecting students to acquire a particular skill or series of skills-- such as sight recognition, comprehension, spelling, grammar and writing-- students are exposed to all these skills at once, through immersion in a print-rich environment. Students are encouraged to write as well as read; and they learn from materials that have meaning to them. A "whole language" approache is deeply respectful of learners' own knowledge, with meaning and context emphasized over rules and definitions. Through discussion of issues important to them, TLP learners are encouraged to think critically, and to state and back up opinions both orally and in writing. Abstract thinking skills such as seeing multiple perspectives, projecting into the future, using symbolism, and understanding hypothetical consequences, are also introduced, since mastery of these is important for social recognition and higher education. The Literacy Project also offers a "whole" approach to math, where concepts as well as operations are introduced.

In TLP's view, "whole language" offers students control over their own learning. This results in faster, more thorough learning, and increases students' understanding of larger social issues affecting their lives. TLP believes that by helping people to master using language as a tool, it can help uncover and nurture people's inner motivation-- to identify and work towards their dreams.

The Project also strives to build a strong sense of community and peer support at each learning site as a center for community, as well as individual, empowerment. TLP classrooms reflect this emphasis on community and empowerment. Teachers, tutors and learners come together to share food, books, opinions, skills and support. Group activities are integrated with individualized learning. Issues that affect local people's lives, such as unemployment, literacy, tax reform, AIDS, and homelessness are often the focus of study. Through group writing projects, learners have corresponded with Mrs. Bush, legislators, and learners in other communities. They have also held workshops addressing skill needs a group has identified: budgeting, nutrition, bank accounts, improving self-esteem.

TLP's idea of community is an inclusive one. TLP's Greenfield and Orange sites are accessible to people with disabilities, and several are enrolled, including one homeless woman. Literacy Project staff see shelter residents as disabled people, "to some extent, the same population we usually deal with, with the same kinds of problems: abuse, drugs, unemployment. For all of them, education is less important than survival." Homeless individuals also studied at The Literacy Project before the Shelter Education Program started: several TLP learners became homeless and continued studying there during their stay at the Greenfield shelter. Four pregnant teens now at the Greenfield shelter have been studying for a while at TLP.

- Greenfield Family Inn and Orange/Athol Family Inn

The Greenfield Family Inn and Orange/Athol Family Inn both opened in 1987 to provide temporary shelter and other emergency services to homeless families in these communities. The Greenfield Family Inn can serve up to 24 guests (families, usually women and their children and pregnant women). The Orange/Athol Family Inn can serve 20 guests, again only families. Both shelters offer 24 hour staff coverage, each with a Director and Assistant Director, a Family Life Advocate and Counselors. Both seek to move families beyond survival: to secure and maintain permanent housing; to obtain benefits for which they are eligible; and achieve a degree of family stability.

To this end, the shelters offer a variety of services on-site, as well as referrals to many social service agencies. In-house meetings and workshops address life skills relevant for homeless families: housing search, tenant's rights, budgeting, nutrition, dental prevention, parenting and others. Shelter staff work to build women's self-esteem by setting small goals that don't overwhelm them. Staff also try to create a supportive environment where guests can help each other solve problems, or just lend an ear. They also offer optional follow-up support for up to three months after guests leave the shelter.

Shelters in both Greenfield and Orange are facing an increasingly difficult job as they try to support and stabilize families in crisis. Over 90% of guests at both shelters are people with roots in the area, many of them the working poor. These small, rural communities have seen a long downward spiral of economic depression. Both are former mill towns where traditional factory and farm employers have been bought out, closed down or mechanized. One shelter worker called Orange "a community in denial-- Little Appalachia." A vortex of high rents, high unemployment, low wages and minimal schooling or training has left many families on the streets. Hard times have also driven up the incidence of domestic violence and sexual abuse; these are fast becoming the rule, not the exception, among women entering the Greenfield and Orange shelters. Both Family Inns are also serving more mentally ill guests, those who have been de-institutionalized and those who have never been formally classified. One striking difference between the two shelters is that Greenfield serves primarily women and their children and pregnant teens with only a few men; while Orange sees more two-parent families than female-headed households.

### • The Need for Educational Services

Based on intake information, shelter staff have identified a high rate of need for educational services among guests at the Greenfield and Orange/Athol Family Inns. Most guests are dropouts who list grade 8 as the highest educational level completed. Teachers estimate that guests' skill levels upon entering TLP are, on average, at the 6 - 8th grade level.

There is also a high level of interest among guests in working towards their GED while in the shelter. Since the program began, nearly all eligible guests at the Greenfield site have enrolled. Helping their children in school is an important motivation for many homeless women to continue their own education.

### • Local and State Economic Influences

Depressed local economies are compounded by the State budget crisis, which has also profoundly affected the shelters' and the Education Programs' ability to serve homeless adults. New Department of Public Welfare (DPW) regulations have changed the number of people the Family Inns can serve and how it can serve them. Shelters and motels have been designated "placements of last resort" and DPW exhausts every other possible housing option before it refers families there. Staff knew of at least five families in Athol that DPW had refused to refer to the shelters. They stayed doubled up for months with family or friends, in very difficult situations, with no assistance in getting their own housing. Because the Family Inns depend heavily on DPW referrals, both have gone through periods of being nearly empty. During the May visit, there were only two families at the Orange/Athol Inn. Enrollment in Shelter Education also suffers, since it recruits exclusively among residents of the family shelters. The shelters face another crippling policy shift as of July 1, when the DPW will no longer reimburse them for costs, but only for AFDC clients DPW refers.

All of these changes have occurred at a time when guests face the prospect of longer and longer shelter stays. The Greenfield Inn enjoys a supportive relationship with the local housing authority and has regularly gotten its guests on the emergency shelter list; as a result the average length of stay there has been four weeks, considerably shorter than in other communities. But that will soon change, since Greenfield issued its last housing voucher in May. In Orange, where subsidized housing has always been much harder to come by, no vouchers have been issued to Orange Inn guests since November.

## Program Vision and Goals

- Vision

Given that the Shelter Education Program brings homeless learners directly into Literacy Project classrooms with no added component or special curriculum, TLP's philosophy and vision largely shape the initiative. Beyond strengthening basic skills and working to attain credentials, TLP uses education to address three areas of critical importance for shelter residents: re-building self-esteem; gaining control over their lives and understanding of forces acting on them; and reconnecting with community on their own terms. With their self-esteem under siege and their lives almost entirely out of their control– to the extent that someone else decides where they live, when they sleep, what they eat and how they spend much of their time– homeless adults need the kinds of education The Literacy Project offers.

Shelter partners also see education as an important piece of stabilizing families and keeping them out of homelessness. In their view, education can offer residents a chance to do something positive for themselves, to be affirmed as intelligent and capable people. They look to the Shelter Education Program to work from a guest's particular need or interest, such as child development or writing, to interest her in education. In the Staff's view, this program should help residents move beyond their present crisis, envisage a better future and set goals to move in that direction. It must also help guests understand economic, social and other factors that shape their experience and their choices. The program should take a long-term view, planting seeds of confidence and self-reliance that may flower in the future.

- Goals

Program goals and objectives reflect providers' emphasis on empowerment, community and a long-range view. The Shelter Education Program seeks to:

- Help shelter residents begin to feel in control of their lives and gain skills to control their situation;
- Make education a major part of residents' life plans;
- Help participants set reasonable and helpful goals;
- Help participants identify and reach their educational goals;
- Help participants understand societal and government systems;
- Help participants think abstractly, critically and creatively;
- Keep students connected to learning when they leave the shelter; and
- Integrate shelter residents into the larger community.

While education and shelter providers broadly agree on program goals, there are some areas where they disagree on methods and vehicles to realize these goals. These will be discussed below under "Concerns and Tensions." The Shelter Education Project also brings one fundamental question into focus: in the absence of any designated support person or advocacy process, can mainstreaming homeless learners into any program — even an accepting and empowering one like TLP– adequately address their needs?

## Distinguishing Characteristics

- The Shelter Education Program (SEP) offers services to residents of two primarily rural counties in western Massachusetts, where towns are separated by considerable distance and public transport is very poor.

- The Greenfield and Orange/Athol SEP mainstreams shelter residents into a year-round community learning center which offers individualized and group instruction on a drop-in center model. There is no designated program coordinator or advocate.

- This program pays for some shelter staff time to do program recruitment and support.

- In a year of operation, the Shelter Education Program has become well enough known that many incoming guests learn about it through the Employment and Training program before they enter the Family Inns.

- The Literacy Project has a very strong emphasis on student control at both the classroom and program level. TLP's cooperative management structure and its efforts to build community have generated high levels of student ownership. Learners sit on TLP's advisory board and on a special student advisory board at the Orange site; former students are included among staff and volunteers. Learners at the Orange site have also completely renovated the back classroom there.

- At the Learning Project, education is based on a distinct theoretical model: "whole language." This approach to teaching reading and writing is respectful of learners' context, needs and knowledge. It also emphasizes learner control of the learning process as an avenue to taking control in other areas of their lives.

- TLP's educational model emphasizes self-esteem and re-connection to community for all learners. Regular classroom activities include life skills like budgeting, nutrition, tenants' rights, and parenting skills.

- TLP teachers and volunteers pay a great deal of attention to creating an accepting, supportive learning environment. The classroom environment is relaxed and informal. Staff cultivate peer learning and support through social activity as well as group discussions and projects. Homeless learners come into a strong "community of learners" that is known and respected in the broader Greenfield, Orange and Athol communities.

- Shelter and education providers in this initiative are very tuned into the political, economic and social factors influencing homelessness. Understanding this broader environment and learning to advocate for oneself within it is more than a theoretical goal for this program. TLP's classroom activities have engaged students in corresponding with legislators and other political leaders on homelessness and a variety of other social justice issues that affect learners' lives such as AIDS, taxes, and abuse.

- TLP works on developing learners' abstract thinking skills and their ability to back up arguments both orally and in writing. Group discussions on issues of importance to learners give them opportunities to hear and weigh multiple views. These are complemented by writing activities.

- TLP works to create a sense of equality and mutual respect where participants can say what's on their minds.

- The Shelter Education Program has attempted to offer shelter participants the option of a "break" from studying at the time they move into permanent housing, if they want it. They have found that shelter participants often need six to eight months off at this point to get their lives back together before they continue with classes. It should be noted that due to the very short average length of stay in the Greenfield Family Inn (four weeks), the SEP has had a very brief opportunity to make contact with homeless learners. (Recent state regulations may change this.)

- TLP is committed to continuing services to program participants until they complete their goals, however long that takes. TLP has an overall retention rate of 70-80%.
- Partners in this program have developed an innovative family literacy initiative that complements existing SEP services. The family literacy initiative, for which partners are seeking funding from private foundations, will offer participatory training in literate child care and child development to homeless parents who are engaged in continuing their own education.

## Program Strengths

- Teachers: TLP's teaching staff is one of the Shelter Education Program's greatest strengths. Teachers are praised by learners and shelter staff for "going the extra mile" to make it work. Teachers at both sites are sensitive to the kinds of extra practical and emotional support homeless learners need to succeed. Although they aren't "officially" responsible and are not compensated beyond their regular pay, teachers have given generously of their time and energy to counsel and nurture learners, visit them at the shelter, offer rides, help arrange child care, send letters and cards to absent learners, and otherwise respond in any way possible.
- Shared Approach to Serving Homeless Adults: All three partners in this initiative have a broad and holistic view of their services to homeless families. They all focus on long-term stabilization and empowerment, in addition to securing housing. Staff from both shelters have made presentations to TLP staff and volunteers. TLP and both shelters are in contact with an extensive network of human service providers in Franklin and Hampshire counties. The Greenfield leg of the partnership is very open to discussion and problem-solving.
- Shelter Support: The Greenfield Family Inn's approach to building community and peer support within the shelter is congruent with TLP's community-building focus. Staff at the Greenfield site are enthusiastic about the education program and support it in a variety of ways:
  (1) The Assistant Director tries to find something residents like to do or thinks they're interested in-- like writing-- and encourages them to pursue it in the education program. She continues to reinforce guests' motivation and self-confidence.
  (2) An evening and weekend counselor, who is also a substitute teacher, helps residents do homework and prepare for tests.
  (3) Staff try to create a supportive environment, a mini-community, where guests can be resources for each other.
  (4) The shelter includes discussion of educational plans in its exit interviews and in the optional three month follow-up it offers guests.
- Community Roots: TLP has considerable understanding of the communities it serves, and is committed to responding to the whole range of concerns learners bring into the classroom. TLP has served many learners who are dealing with poverty, unemployment, drug abuse, teen pregnancy, battering and other common issues confronting shelter residents. Shelter residents have been enrolled at TLP in the past.

- Broad Eligibility: The Shelter Education Program will enroll any resident of the Greenfield or Orange/Athol Family Inns who has less than a high school diploma; they are equally comfortable working with low-level readers and individuals who are nearly ready for the GED. They have no other eligibility criteria. SEP has taken referrals from several other local shelters. One teacher has a background working with the chronically mentally ill and is interested in reaching out to more mentally ill homeless people.

- Support Services: The Shelter Education Program makes available high quality childcare on-site. It has also budgeted transportation funds for learners who have left the shelter. The program tried a variety of strategies to make learners aware of these funds and particularly to help them feel comfortable with leaving their children at childcare. (Both support services are very under-utilized.)

- Approach to Adult Education: The Literacy Project's broad and learner-driven concept of adult education is very well suited to the needs and concerns of homeless learners. It acknowledges the crises homeless learners face, but also connects their immediate crises with other non-homeless learners' ongoing struggles. In this context, the classroom is one arena where homeless learners can take charge and be in control; they can come as much as they want and work at their own speed. Learners can see concrete progress in reading, writing and math skills, as some among a number of tools that can help them empower themselves in other areas of their lives. Learners are encouraged to apply these skills to practical problem-solving and advocating for themselves by, for example, speaking out or writing letters to politicians. TLP also offers instruction on life skills like budgeting, tenants' rights, self-esteem, nutrition and others to respond to learners' concerns.

- Supportive Learning Environment: At The Literacy Project, shelter residents come into a lively, non-traditional classroom where head instructors, assistant instructors, volunteers and learners interact as equals-- often around a large table. Lively discussion is part of each class. Group and individualized learning are integrated in what one teacher calls "unstructured structure." Teachers and tutors offer learners frequent feedback and encouragement; learners also draw each other out and support each other. One teacher identified three key ingredients for a good learning climate: love, hope for people's potential and peer support.

- Intake and Goal-Setting: When first talking with participants about what they want to study, TLP teachers not only ask about their history and skills levels, but also how they feel about their experiences. Teachers help learners set long-term as well as short-term goals. They try to understand each person's "picture of herself" to expand it and make it real. Teachers ask learners what they want to be doing in one year; in five years. They also ask about her "dream job" or "dream lifestyle."

- Transition: The Shelter Education Program takes a participatory approach to transition. When a participant is due to leave the shelter, staff there ask her how she wants to continue with her learning, or whether she wants to plan a break. At TLP, teachers ask the same questions: "How can we help make it possible for you to continue with us, or to come back when you're ready?" The program will allow a learner to re-enroll at any time.

- Assessing Cognitive Development: Helping learners develop self-esteem is an important goal for TLP and this program. TLP is thinking about how to measure or document progress in this area. Although they have not yet set up any system, they are looking for short, informal tools to do this kind of assessment. TLP has applied for a third VISTA volunteer with research skills to help with this work.

## Concerns and Tensions

- State Policy Affecting Shelter Guests: Both the Greenfield and Orange shelters have gone through periods of being nearly empty because of changes in Department of Public Welfare (DPW) referral policies. At the same time, families in crisis are kept in difficult and crowded housing situations that aggravate their other problems. Because they are designated "placements of last resort," shelters cannot bring their skills and resources to the assistance of these families, many of whom are confronting mental illness, abuse or substance abuse as well as poverty and homelessness. The Family Inns will have even more difficulty staying afloat after July 1, when the DPW begins reimbursing shelters only for AFDC clients they refer.

  State policies have also cut off the flow of housing vouchers that have allowed the Family Inns to help residents get into permanent housing. At the same time, the DPW continues to treat guests as if they had some option other than the shelter: after 90 days, they are pressured to look for jobs and the Department of Social Services begins to intervene in child custody. The Family Inns are doing their best to protect guests from the impact of these regulations and the climate of insecurity and threat they create.

- Staffing Pattern and Roles: The Head Instructors at the Greenfield and Orange/Athol sites are the lynchpins of the Shelter Education Program. There is no designated program coordinator or homeless advocate to organize services to homeless learners. The shelter program, which mainstreams learners into ongoing classes, simply adds students to the teachers' class loads; no additional instructors were hired under this grant. The two Head Instructors at Greenfield and Orange, who deeply respect and understand homeless learners, have stepped in to fill gaps in services. On top of their normal load of teaching, supervision and considerable paperwork, they have assumed a variety of additional responsibilities for learners in this program. They offer support and informal counseling, develop appropriate lessons, do intake and follow-up, visit shelters and even offer transport in some cases. TLP teachers have also been active in the statewide network of administrators and instructors working in the homeless education initiative.

  At the same time, teachers' insights and concerns about this initiative have not been addressed. Despite TLP's participatory philosophy, teachers had little input into the proposal or decisions about the program, certainly not input commensurate with their roles and responsibilities. Both teachers initially believed that it would be no problem to mainstream shelter residents, because they are in so many ways like their usual learners. But both have discovered that the extra time, support, counseling and logistical assistance they offer homeless learners is a necessary minimum for helping them feel capable to re-enter and succeed at The Literacy Project. Besides time and workload, teachers see several structural limitations to what they can offer homeless learners. They aren't on staff at the shelters or working as an "educational presence" there, and they don't have the time or resources to do follow-up that would keep them in contact with participants after they leave the shelter.

- Mainstreaming/Lack of Coordination: The teachers' observations bring a fundamental question into focus: in the absence of any designated support person or advocacy process, it is difficult for even a supportive, empowering program like TLP to adequately address homeless learners' needs by directly mainstreaming them. This grant essentially has been buying slots or maintaining the infrastructure in an unusually effective learning center whose philosophy addresses many important issues confronting homeless learners. Yet, an effective shelter education program should, in some way, offer coordination and advocacy functions that address homeless learners' re-entry, support and follow-up concerns. Shelter staff call teachers to refer students, as other agencies do.

But there is no one in this program who is directly responsible for organizing services to shelter residents, communicating with shelters, checking on areas of overlap, offering ongoing support or following up with residents who leave the shelter. Teachers take on as many of these functions as they can, but these are teachers whose primary responsibility is to conduct TLP classes, not teachers working specifically for this program for any part of their work week. There is also no "up front" piece to orient learners as they move into TLP.

- Partner Communication and Philosophy: While education and shelter providers broadly agree on program goals, there are some areas where one shelter disagrees with the other partners on methods and vehicles for realizing these goals. The Greenfield leg of this partnership is strong and open; but at the time of the evaluation visit, there were some communication gaps between the Orange/Athol Family Inn and the TLP. These gaps may, in part, be attributed to the stress Orange/Athol had been under due to DPW restrictions, local politics and rapid turnover in personnel. The fact that this partnership has no designated coordinator, and meets irregularly, may have aggravated the problem. The Orange Head Instructor had met weekly with the Family Life Advocate at Orange Family Inn, but at the time of the visit that had not happened in several months.

  Staff at the Orange/Athol Family Inn expressed a range of concerns about the Shelter Education Program, several of which were fundamental. They strongly advocated for classes to be held in the shelter, as a regular shelter program, and not at the North Quabbin Adult Education Center (TLP's local site). In their opinion, holding classes at the shelter would motivate more residents to enroll and would alleviate childcare problems. They also felt that the current schedule of late afternoon and evening classes made it difficult for guests to attend. They also questioned the effectiveness of TLP's "whole language" approach for high-level learners. The Orange/Athol Family Inn Director had enrolled two of her staff in the program to work on their writing, spelling and grammar; in several months, she had noticed little improvement. Finally, staff at this shelter felt that the TLP did not appreciate constraints on their time that made it difficult for them to attend meetings.

  At this level the philosophies of The Literacy Project and the Family Inns work against, not with, each other. The "whole language" choice and empowerment orientation of TLP chafes against the more traditional rule-driven preferences of the Orange/Athol shelter and vice-versa. Homeless learners get caught in the middle. Both the Greenfield and Orange shelters have a long list of rules (35 in all), which govern curfews and other controls over guests' behaviors.

- Support Services and Transition: The Literacy Project and Shelter partners are concerned that their childcare and transportation support services have not been utilized. They have tried a variety of strategies to resolve this problem, with little success. The Greenfield site has a skilled childcare worker on retainer and has held open houses to introduce her to homeless families. Yet, families prefer to leave their kids at the shelter, in the care of another resident. In Orange, the program has paid for childcare slots at Educare, a nearby center. Guests there also do not want to leave their children with someone they don't know. Additionally, Educare only takes children age 2.9 and up.

For learners who have left the shelters, transportation is even more difficult (both shelters are within walking distance of the learning centers). The program budgeted money for bus fare, taxis and mileage; but this part of Massachusetts is very poorly served by public transportation, and many TLP learners are without cars. Shelter residents are placed in housing up to 30 miles from the learning centers, with no way of getting to them. One very enthusiastic learner who had three small children and no car was moved to Winchendon, a 40 minute drive from the Orange site. It would be difficult to find a volunteer who could take four or five hours twice a week to get the learner and her children to TLP. A van, or a regular vehicle and driver, seems the only solution to this obstacle; and these are way beyond TLP's current financial capability.

Counseling is another component that the Shelter Education Program would very much like to build in, funds permitting. Both the shelter and TLP do as much informal counseling as they can, and the shelters can refer guests for formal counseling. Yet, all partners are sensitive to how loaded school, parenting, powerlessness, transition and other experiences can be for families in crisis. They would like to be able to offer participants support group activities and crisis intervention as well as academic guidance.

- Limitations on Serving all Local Homeless Adults: The structure of this partnership, which brings The Literacy Project together with only two family shelters, limits the program's capacity to serve the many different kinds of homeless people in Franklin and Hampshire counties who might benefit from educational services. The Shelter Education Program has made only a few connections with a very organized and active alliance of local homeless people. One single homeless learner was enrolled in the program, and staff were concerned about whether this violated the terms of the partnership. The week of the evaluation visit, 35 single Franklin county homeless adults (including this learner) held an information session on the Greenfield common-- two blocks from TLP-- to protest the closing of the only shelter serving single adults. By targeting homeless families, the Shelter Education Program risks further marginalizing single homeless people, often considered less worthy of assistance.

In its second year, this program did try to expand to serve other shelters, including two shelters for single women. It proposed to formally include Jessie's House and Helen Mitchell House in the partnership, and to purchase six ESL slots from Casa Latina, a Northampton community agency, to serve the largely non-English speaking populations in these shelters. This strategy would have increased the racial, linguistic and geographic diversity of the population this program serves. The proposal was rejected by the State DOE. The Shelter Education Program has continued to accept referrals from these two shelters; but it hesitates to take residents with low-level English skills since it is not well equipped to teach ESL. Because it is the only local adult learning center. It does enroll a few higher-level ESL students in Greenfield.

# II. Program Design and Implementation

## Education Services

- Schedule of Classes and Activities

The Literacy Project operates on a drop-in model. Students are encouraged to attend at least four hours/week. Individualized instruction as well as group activities are offered.

Greenfield: Instruction is available 1:00 - 8:00 p.m. on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday and 1:00 - 5:00 p.m. on Wednesdays. A full-time Head Instructor and Assistant Instructor, as well as trained volunteer tutors, are available to work with students.

Orange: Instruction is available 3:00 - 5:00 p.m. and 6:00 - 8:00 p.m. Monday - Thursday. A Head Instructor, Assistant Instructor and tutors are available to assist students.

- Eligibility and Recruitment

All homeless adults who have not attained a high school diploma are eligible to enroll in the Shelter Education Program. Although TLP has enrolled, under this grant, several homeless individuals who came to them seeking services, outreach and recruitment are conducted only with the Family Inns in Greenfield and Orange. TLP serves learners with a wide range of skill levels: as of May 1990, four learners were at ABE level I (0 - 8) and eight were at Level II (9 - 12).

During intake, guests are told about the availability of this program. Intake counselors also ask guests about the last grade level they completed. At the Greenfield Inn, nearly all eligible guests have chosen to enroll in the program; the Assistant Director reports that she rarely gets a negative response. In Orange, fewer guests enroll. Orange shelter staff attribute this to local culture, which doesn't value schooling very much. Shelter staff will accompany interested guests to visit the TLP sites for an orientation there.

Following through on a shelter staff recommendation, the TLP teacher in Orange has made several presentations at the Family Inn to its guests. Attendance at the presentation was mandatory for all guests, which, as discussed, disturbed the teacher. Three enrollments resulted, but two of these guests subsequently dropped out, stating that they had entered the program more because they felt staff would like it than for their own reasons. There is also some question about whether all Orange guests have heard about the education program. One woman who had already partially passed her GED was in the shelter several weeks before she learned that she could complete the GED during her stay there.

- Enrollment and Retention

In its first year, the Shelter Education Program enrolled 22 learners. Three of these learners were still enrolled by May of the second year; two of the three had come back to TLP after a break of from six to eight months after they moved out of the shelter. As discussed, transportation and childcare are serious barriers to participants who get housing any distance from the learning site. Nine new learners had enrolled in the second year. A total of 12 were enrolled at the time of the May site visit. Six of the 12 learners had attained 12 hours or more of instruction at that point. The Literacy Project tries not to terminate learners unless they ask to take a break, and then they are welcome to come back at any time. TLP defines "completion" as "staying in the program until a learner's goals are met, whether simple improvement or GED." Shelter staff and TLP reported that most participants attend regularly, often for much more than the four hour weekly minimum.

In the first quarter of Program Year 2, the SEP attempted to enroll about six people who had not yet enrolled in the program.

This program has resolved the problem of confidentiality by limiting those who know which learners are homeless. Head Instructors know, since they do the intake, but Assistant Instructors, Tutors and other learners do not know about a participants' housing status unless she chooses to tell them.

- Learning Activities, Curriculum and Environment

### Activities

As described above, TLP's curriculum mixes individual and group activities, and emphasizes materials and content that are relevant to learners. Both TLP sites are jam-packed with print materials of all kinds: books, magazines, posters, letters, maps, announcements. Instruction is self-paced, and learners are encouraged to set short-term learning goals for themselves. Writing and reading their own stories is encouraged for learners at all levels. Many learners also keep journals. The "3 R's" are complemented by group discussions of current events and topics, group writing projects and life skills workshops.

In assessing how successfully TLP meets homeless learners needs, teachers agreed that the curriculum generally serves them well. It doesn't need major changes or special components, although some life skills might strengthen it. In their opinion, what the homeless learners need in their classes is more caring and support. They need someone who will listen, help them through divorce or to get help with battering. In the teacher's opinion, learning activities for homeless adults should not draw artificial lines between "educational topics" and "non-educational topics." These women want to learn about parenting, budgeting and photography as much as they want to learn to write better, to get a GED, a job or admission to college.

### Learning Environment

Each of the two learning centers is comfortable and inviting; teacher, volunteers and learners seem to really enjoy their time there. But the inviting mix of bustle, banter, empathy and productive silences that characterized TLP classrooms is no accident; each instructors pay careful attention to creating this ambiance-- to which each learner and volunteer then contributes. Learners spoke of the close relationships they feel with TLP instructors.

The Greenfield site is lively and open, like the instructors there. Learners and tutors filter in and out of a small, book-lined classroom dominated by a big round table. Posters, signs and maps make a lively quilt above the bookshelves. A corner table holds a coffee maker, cups and snacks. Bags of pretzels and also cookies drifted over to the round table, where as many as six students each worked on their own agenda. Attendance and comments are recorded in a log in the middle of that table. Those who wanted more privacy and quiet sat in an adjoining room where the teacher's desk and a computer were also located. Learners who wanted more interaction and feedback with the instructors and tutors stayed close to the table. One student has her wheelchair pushed right up to the table.

The Head Instructor moves from learner to learner, sometimes stopping to join in a joke or discussion, at other times focusing intently on one student and her work. She and the Assistant Instructor seem to have a different running joke with each student; students have no trouble teasing instructors and each other. Students also offer each other help and suggestions on everything from fractions to court cases. The classroom feels very real, very much like a community of friends who have come together in good spirits to tackle work they enjoy and to catch up with each other.

The Orange site (The North Quabbin Community Education Center) is cozier and more subdued than Greenfield, but every bit as inviting. The Center is a converted storefront on a sleepy street. It has one large classroom, a small office downstairs, and upstairs another space for more private learning and a bathroom. Students have done all the work to renovate the upstairs rooms and bath. The main classroom has several long tables with chairs, as well as a number of bookcases filled with a wide variety of novels, workbooks and other materials. A bulletin board displays letters from former learners, editorials, letters to legislators, a newsletter from the Housing Alliance, an AIDS fact sheet, dates for orientations to the community college and a listing of "Jobs for the '90's." Popular magazines are stacked nearby. One section of the board is devoted to announcements from the Student Advisory Board that learners have established at this site. One participant in the Shelter Education Program sits on this Board. Only four students and a volunteer have come to study this evening, fewer than usual.

The Instructor at the Orange site is calm, warm and very effective at drawing out her students. On the evening of this visit, the instructor had spent much of the day taking an SEP learner for her GED test, and they both returned happy and excited to report that the learner had passed. Yet, she was able quickly to switch gears to offer empathy and understanding to a learner who was distressed by remarks jealous friends had made. The Instructor not only talked with this learner herself, but also connected her with another student who had a similar problem. The Orange Instructor identified "love, hope for people's potential, and peer support" as the "key ingredients" she tries to nurture in her classroom; she is clearly succeeding on all three counts.

- Student Assessment

TLP only does intake assessments, unless a student asks to be tested at some later point. Instructors ask incoming learners to take the Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT), the Informal Reading Inventory (IRI), a basic math skills diagnostic, or GED predictor tests, depending on their needs and interests. To assess learner progress in the program, TLP staff rely on pragmatic indicators for academic skills: observable improvement in writing, spelling and grammar, increased comfort with writing and reading, and mastery of progressive math skills.

Teachers rely more on intuition for signs of progress in cognitive development. At intake, they ask each learner to talk about her "picture of herself," and to project forward, to talk about what she wants to be doing in one year, five years, in her "dream job."

Signs of progress include: learners talking more openly about problems they're dealing with; becoming more aware of options and asking for help (e.g. with an abusive relationship); and taking control in specific areas of their lives. TLP's Director knows a lot about cognitive development and is very interested in finding ways to document this kind of progress. He is looking for a short, simple written instrument that would yield useful information on this.

- Teacher and Tutor Training and Support

Head Instructors and Assistant Instructors at The Literacy Project have roots in the local communities where they teach. Both Head Instructors have experience as Assistant Instructors. Tutors include recent TLP graduates as well as people with graduate degrees. Mastery of the "whole language" approach to teaching, communication skills and commitment to empowerment and community building are essential qualities TLP seeks in teachers. Tutors complete a training course.

Teachers and tutors have regular opportunities for in-service training (IST). Some Wednesday afternoons are devoted to IST topics that staff identifies. Recent topics include: learning disabilities, writing process, peer supervision, mediation and burn-out. Shelter staff have also made presentations to TLP teachers and tutors on homelessness and issues homeless families face.

While The Literacy Project offers a very supportive environment for learners, teachers are clearly in need of more support than is currently available to them. They have heavy enrollment loads: 70 in Greenfield and 60 in Orange (with slightly more than half of these learners active at any one time). One Assistant Instructor and about 10 volunteer tutors work at each site. TLP teachers have a heavy load of paperwork and documentation, on top of their teaching, lesson preparation, assessment and supervision duties. Because learners are funded through a variety of programs and sources, teachers complete many different forms: for verification of eligibility, enrollment, learner attendance, volunteer hours and learner mileage. Orange has no copy machine or computer to facilitate paperwork; the instructor travels 19 miles to Greenfield to do all her copy and computer work. Teachers also spend time doing enrollments, intake testing and orientations, and attending a variety of meetings.

As discussed above under "Concerns," TLP teachers have generously taken on a variety of uncompensated coordination and support functions critical for the Shelter Education Program's success.

- Outcomes

In almost a year and a half of program operation, several outcomes stand out:

  - More than 30 learners have been enrolled in the SEP for anywhere from several weeks to over a year. Two have returned to TLP after a hiatus of six to eight months during which they settled into their new homes.

  - Several participants have attained their GED's through this program. One student has become very involved with TLP and has joined the student advisory board at the North Quabbin site.

- Through this initiative, TLP has put its educational philosophy, which focuses on empowerment, control and community building, in the service of people who very much need to work on those elements. Through this process, TLP has not only learned more about what it takes to effectively serve homeless adults; it has also had the chance to learn more about the strengths and limitations of its own unique educational model.

- The Greenfield leg of this partnership has developed into an effective collaboration based on shared philosophy and concerns. Not only has it solved problems relating to this program, but has also developed a proposal to expand their collaboration in an innovative Family Literacy Program.

## Program Organization

- Partnership

As discussed, this three-way partnership has developed somewhat unevenly. While TLP is very much in tune with key staff at the Greenfield Family Inn, there has been a lot of staff turnover at the Orange/Athol Family Inn and current staff do not share all assumptions held by the other two partners. One distinguishing feature of this program is that it builds in funding for shelter staff time; shelter staff are primarily responsible for program recruitment, and also help support learners. The agency directors meet occasionally, but not regularly, to discuss the program. Frontline staff at the Orange site (the Head Instructor and the Family Life Advocate) met weekly for a while and are trying to reestablish that practice. The Greenfield teacher and shelter staff have no regular contact.

- Coordination and Management

This program is unique in that it has neither a designated coordinator nor teachers hired specifically for the program (who assume coordination roles in other programs). As Lead Agency, The Literacy Project does fiscal management and reporting for the Shelter Education Program. The TLP Director acts as the primary link between this program and the State Department of Education. He seems to be well-informed about this program and very aware of both positive and negative developments. TLP's Director appears to be as overloaded and under-supported as the teachers there. This should be partially alleviated by help from several new faces at TLP: a grants writer and VISTA volunteers who will work on record keeping, statistics and assessment.

TLP's cooperative management structure is another of its unusual features. A board including learners, graduate volunteers, community supporters, staff and other adult education professionals determines program direction. TLP has been very successful in creating "communities of learners" around its Greenfield and Orange sites. Students at The Literacy Project feel a high level of ownership for the project, and contribute a great deal to its successful operation; however, they don't seem to have much input at the level of specific programming– for example, what grants TLP seeks or what initiatives it undertakes. The Executive Director is primarily responsible for these. Program development is sometimes discussed with teachers at in-service meetings. For the shelter program, Head Instructors have not had input into this program commensurate with part in its success.

- Support Services

Both Head Instructors observed that: "The amount of support and caring most homeless learners need is much greater than for our usual students. They might not need a different curriculum, so we serve them pretty well in that regard. But we need to find ways to offer these women all the emotional support and encouragement we can-- it takes them so far!" Although this program does not include an official counseling component, these teachers perform the dual role of teacher and counselor. They feel a special duty to be sensitive and responsive to homeless learners' needs, since they are the only ones in the classroom who knows that person's status, unless the learner chooses to tell others.

Shelter staff also offer support, information on life skills, and informal counseling. They can refer guests to formal counseling.

The Shelter Education Program has built into its budget funds for childcare and transportation that are necessary to make education truly accessible to adult learners in this area. However, childcare services are not being used, and transport networks are inadequate for most learners who have moved out of the shelter. The partners have made considerable efforts to make sure learners can access these services.

- Incentives/Barriers to Participation

**Incentives**

Many Family Inn guests are dropouts; the chance to work towards a GED appeals to many of them; some even come into the Greenfield Shelter knowing they want to work on education. Many guests are motivated by an interest in helping their kids in school. Some also know The Literacy Project, and find the atmosphere there inviting and supportive. TLP's emphasis on empowerment and on addressing important issues in learners' lives creates a safe place where guests can begin to deal with homelessness and other problems-- where they can tap into community support as equals, not clients. The Literacy Project offers a learning community and a social network to which guests can keep connected after they leave the shelter.

**Barriers**

There appear to be few barriers to participation for Greenfield Inn guests, who live only a few blocks from TLP. In Orange, lack of evening childcare and care for children under 2.9 years of age have posed problems for some learners. Transportation is a major barrier for most learners once they leave the shelters.

At a programmatic level, communication gaps and differences in approach to education between TLP and the Orange Family Inn may have kept some guests at that facility from educational services. Very limited program coordination and a heavy load on instructors has perhaps kept the program from meeting some learners' needs as well as it might have. Follow-up with guests who have left the shelter is the area where limited coordination and staff resources have had the most serious impact on learners.

## Transition and Follow-Up

### Transition

The Shelter Education Program tends to lose contact with participants who are placed in housing outside Greenfield and Orange. Many of the women who worked successfully at TLP for the few weeks or months they were in the shelter find themselves living 20 or more miles from the learning center, with small children, no car and no buses or taxis available. This is a difficult series of hurdles for even the most determined person to overcome.

The program has found that in some cases learners will take a break from education and will come back to TLP after six or eight months when they have had a chance to get settled in their homes and get other aspects of their lives together. Two learners have come back to TLP in this way.

Both partners in the Shelter Education Program have a participatory approach to transition. When a participant is due to leave the Family Inn, shelter staff and teachers each ask her: "How can we help make it possible for you to continue with us, or to come back when you're ready?" The program will allow a learner to re-enroll at any time.

### Follow-Up

Each shelter has a staff person responsible for making follow-up visits to families who want them for three months, or longer in special cases. They have not as yet coordinated with TLP to include follow-up on education; the project has not yet found a way to gather reliable information on why learners stay away or come back to education after they leave the shelter. Teachers send letters and notes to stay in touch with these participants.

## Program Assessment

Partners in the Shelter Education Program have identified four dimensions on which they assess this initiative:

- effectiveness of academic program;
- availability and utilization of support services;
- impact on guests; and
- progress of program participants towards a sense of control over their lives.

To this point, program assessment has been informal and centered on responding to problems such as the under-utilization of support services or the tendency to lose participants when they leave the shelter. The program is eager to find systematic approaches to assessing each of the four dimensions, and the TLP would undoubtedly benefit from this, but it would take considerably more resources than currently are available.

## Expansion/Innovation

This program's attempt, in its second year proposal, to expand to serve a wider mix of shelters, ethnic groups and geographic areas was stopped short by the funding source. Since then, it has taken referrals from shelters other than the partner family shelters, but it has not developed recruitment strategies to reach out to other homeless groups.

TLP has "kept the channels open," and hopes to follow through with its intention to expand. The Shelter Education Program has made only a few connections with a very organized and active alliance of local homeless people who are single. One teacher is particularly interested in working with mentally ill homeless learners; she has a background in mental health as well as adult education.

Valley Programs, the Family Inns' parent agency, intends soon to develop transitional housing where guests would stay for 12 - 18 months. If the Shelter Education Program can include these residents, it will have a much larger window to re-connect them with learning.

Finally, the partners in this initiative have elaborated an innovative "Family Literacy" program, which would include training for guests in literate childcare and child development along with adult learning activities and counseling. They are seeking funding from private foundations for pieces of this program .

## III. Recommendations

- State Policy Affecting Shelter Guests: The State Departments of Public Welfare, Public Housing and Social Services must consider the devastating impact of recent budget-driven policy changes on homeless individuals. They should consider, in particular, how counterproductive it is to impose mandates that work against homeless families' efforts to achieve long-term stabilization and self-reliance. Restricting homeless families' access to shelter services, and mandating jobs or short-term training for women who need first to work on basic skills or a GED are prime examples of such short-sighted policies. Further, continuing to enforce the 90-day limitations on shelter stays and attendant regulations is completely irrational, in a time when avenues out of the shelter have been closed for most guests.

- Coordination: The coordination that currently exists is thanks to the extra efforts of the Head Instructors. The Shelter Education Program should now formally consider what aspects of its program need to be coordinated in order to serve learners most effectively. SEP should examine how well current patterns of staffing, responsibility and accountability accomplish this coordination; and it should consider alternative patterns, such as designating one coordinator or somehow building in coordination and continuity, particularly for learner support, assessment, transition and follow-up. Since it is not clear whether shelter staff are being used as effectively as they could be in this respect, involving shelter staff in coordination is also advisable.

- Teacher Support: A related recommendation is that TLP consider how teachers' pivotal role in acting as learner advocates and counselors might be recognized, supported and compensated. One partial solution might be to provide support staff and services to take on some of the paperwork tasks that sap teachers' time. A variety of tasks like enrollment, attendance and assessment might also be systemized and streamlined. Another option might be to create an additional part-time homeless counselor or advocate position, or to pay current instructors for taking on this additional role. Instructors also need to have fuller input into program design and decisions.

- Model of Service Delivery: The Shelter Education Program should consider whether it can build into its services a special piece addressing homeless learners' need for extra support throughout their re-entry to education and their transition to permanent housing. This program should find some ways to act on its instructors insights about the ways in which they find homeless learners' needs to be different and greater than TLP's regular students. It should try to develop special support or advocacy services for the homeless learners who are otherwise well-served by TLP's approach to education. At the same time, the State funding agency must acknowledge the value of using some funds from this initiative to maintain infrastructure or provide slots in a program whose philosophy and goals are so vital for homeless adults.

- State Support for Counseling and Assessment: The State funding agency should consider providing support for the Shelter Education Program to develop (or integrate) a counseling component and a student assessment program congruent with its empowerment approach to education. In both areas, TLP efforts could yield valuable tools that would be of use to many other programs.

- Partnership Communication and Philosophy: Evidence from this statewide initiative overwhelmingly points to compatible philosophies and mutual respect as critical elements in successful partnership. The partners in this project should consider establishing a pattern of more regular contacts between both administrative and service delivery staff. (It is likely that more attention to coordination and continuity will facilitate this.)

- Expansion of Services to Other Homeless Adults: Partners should consider restructuring this collaboration to bring in other shelter partners and to offer services to other homeless groups, particularly single homeless people and mentally ill homeless people. It might be particularly interesting and useful to work through the Homeless Coalition. In addition, the State should reconsider SEP's request to offer ESL slots as a way to bring homeless people from other ethnic groups into this initiative.

**Evaluation Completed by:** Mary Jo Connelly

**Date of Site Visit:** May 21 and 22, 1990

# BRIDGE OVER TROUBLED WATERS (THE BRIDGE, INC.)

# ADULT EDUCATION FOR THE HOMELESS PROGRAM

# STATISTICAL PROFILE

*"This program is helping me a lot-- I'm learning. I like what I'm doing. I hope I finish so that I can make my mother proud, and myself. I need the education. I appreciate the time and the patience the teachers put in with me to help me the best they can."*

Demographics: N = 8

Learners who responded to the survey from the Bridge Over Troubled Waters program were more than likely to be white, female, and under the age of 20. The majority were single and had children. The majority of the respondents had lived in Massachusetts all of their life with 75% having lived in the state over 10 years.

Less than half of the learners reported living in a shelter the past six months and over half reported that they had lived with family or friends in the past six months. The majority reported leaving their last permanent home due to family problems (62.5%).

The main source of income for the learners surveyed was public assistance with 62.5% reporting that they received some type of public assistance. Those who did not receive public assistance were employed full-time. All of those respondents who reported receiving public assistance were receiving AFDC. None of the respondents reported any other type of assistance.

Seventy-five percent of those interviewed indicated that they had worked in the past and 37.5% indicated that they were currently looking for work. The majority of those that had worked in the past had worked in the food service industry.

Education

Half of those interviewed had completed eight grades or less of school. All of those responding had completed at least six grades of school. None of those interviewed had ever participated in an adult education program previously.

The majority of those responding had been involved with the program four weeks or longer (62.5%). Eighty-seven and a half percent reported that this was their first time in program. When asked how they found out about the program, the majority reported that they had found out through an outreach worker. The main reason for enrollment in the program was to obtain a GED. Other reasons for enrolling in the program were predominantly: to do math better; to write better; and to better myself in general.

Eighty-seven and a half percent reported that the program was giving them what they expected. The majority of the respondents reported that they expected "education," and the ability to read, write and do math better. Although all of the respondents indicated that they enrolled to get a GED, only one respondent indicated that she/he "expected" a GED from the program.

Half of the respondents reported that the program was giving them something that they did not expect. Those interviewed indicated that they did not expect to gain self confidence or as much one-to-one help. Those interviewed indicated that they were studying math, reading, and for the GED.

The overwhelming majority indicated that there was something about the program that they liked (87.5%). Common responses about what they liked were: the teachers, the individual attention, the hours, and "respect." Half of those interviewed indicated that there was something about their program that they would like to change. The respondents indicated that they would like to change: "some of the rules;" "have more teachers;" and a later class.

All of those interviewed indicated that they felt they had changed. The majority of respondents indicated that they can ask for help, are not embarrassed by what they don't know, and feel as though they have control over their future.

Half of the respondents reported that they liked having the classes as part of the shelter. The majority indicated that it was difficult to come to class sometimes for a number of reasons. The most frequent responses were: do not want to leave kids; other appointments to keep; transportation is difficult; sickness; and life in the shelter makes it hard.

The majority of those interviewed reported that they would continue taking classes after they leave the shelter. Respondents indicated that good daycare, support from teachers, and transportation would help them after they leave. Half of the respondents indicated that they would like to take GED classes after they leave the shelter, 37.5% indicated that they would like job training, and 37.5% indicated that they would like to attend college.

# PROGRAM PROFILE

## I. Program Summary

### Program History and Context

In 1970, Bridge Over Troubled Waters (The Bridge, Inc.) began developing programs and services to meet the needs of runaways, homeless street youth and other young adults (age 16-24 years) whose lives have become destabilized. Homeless youth have always made up approximately 1/3 of Bridge's clients, and the agency strives to respond to the whole range of their needs: from basic survival to detox, permanent housing, employment and other issues affecting long-term stabilization. In 1989, Bridge served over 3,000 young adults, with an operating budget of over $1 million.

Bridge's educational programming grows out of-- and feeds into-- this long-term mission. Twelve years ago Bridge began offering GED preparation courses, and the Education/Pre-Employment program now includes pre-GED and word processing instruction as well. Since early 1989, Bridge's educational program has been partially supported by a federal McKinney Adult Education for the Homeless grant; the grant has paid 1/3 salary for an outreach worker and an "ed/voc" teacher. Bridge has used McKinney funding to sustain and expand outreach to two groups: youth living in Boston emergency shelters and young mothers living in welfare motels and hotels on the North Shore. The agency undertook these efforts in November 1988 and January 1989, respectively, before it received the McKinney grant. Outreach in Boston has been expanded beyond Long Island Shelter-- Bridge's original partner-- to include Ft. Point Shelter, Woods-Mullen, Pine Street Inn and various overflow winter shelters. There is no longer a formal "partnership" for this grant. The McKinney initiative served 34 participants in its first year and 12 in the first quarter of the second year.

- Bridge Services

  In two decades of work with homeless youth, Bridge has gained a very clear idea of who they are, what they need and how they can be reached with effective services. Bridge has developed an integrated service delivery approach that offers homeless youth resources for adopting a more stable lifestyle, but which leaves them the choice of when and whether to pursue these avenues. Bridge tries to offer street youth a comprehensive "orientation for living." Bridge services are not contingent on a homeless person's choice to adopt and work towards long-term goals; regardless of an individuals' choices, Bridge continues to make available medical, dental and other vital services.

  Five evenings each week, Bridge sends street workers and a medical van out to meet homeless youth on their own turf at various sites in Boston and Cambridge. Counseling services, a Family Life Center, a dental clinic, haircuts and drop-in space are available at Bridge's West Street facility, which is located within sight of the Boston Common and the Park Street subway station. The Education and Pre-Employment programs offer Basic Skills, GED preparation and Word Processing at the West Street site, and link students with academic and vocational counseling and other support services there.

Bridge also operates two short-term transitional living facilities to help young adults move from street life to a stable living and working situation. These residences serve 40 people at a time, including single youth and mothers with children; guests stay between nine months and two years. One of the sites, Bridge-Eliot, also has a long-term independent living residence where nine young adults can learn the "basics" of living on their own while they are still part of a comfortable, familiar community.

### • The Education and Pre-Employment Program

Bridge's Education and Pre-Employment Program holds classes in a bright, sunny room overlooking the Common. Classroom walls are lined with bookcases, offering a wide variety of interesting books and materials. In the next room, computers are available for programmed instruction and word processing training. The hallway outside the classroom is lined with the names and pictures of every student who has attained a GED at Bridge in the past 12 years. In recent years, about 40 students have been graduating annually, and the annual graduation ceremony is a big event at Bridge. The program accepts students with skill levels from the 4th - 12th grade; most fall in the 8th - 10th grade range. The curriculum is competency-based, and draws on a variety of materials, including teacher-made math and social studies "kits" that focus on topics of local interest. The focus of instruction is on passing the GED (except for those enrolled in word processing). Students begin taking predictor tests when their skills reach 10th grade level.

Students develop their own schedules, with most coming in for three to five two-hour classes each week. They work individually and at their own pace; two teachers are available to assist them. Teachers try to make education a positive experience by acknowledging students' efforts and reinforcing their sense of accomplishments. Classes follow a structured format, beginning with 15 minutes of journal writing. Teachers have developed a variety of possible writing topics, for students who want suggestions. They also respond to the daily journal entries. In addition to individualized instruction, workshops on pre-employment skills are offered periodically. Students can also meet with a job developer or get counseling on financial aid for college. Teachers also try to keep students linked with the agency counselors they were assigned at intake. They pass on to counselors information about students' problems and progress, and encourage students to go to counselors with difficult issues. Teachers even remind students of counseling appointments and pass on messages from counselors.

Bridge uses a case management system to organize its many services: to identify youth's needs and goals and to monitor progress on treatment plans. As part of Bridge's case management system, teachers and counselors meet together weekly. This system's holistic approach offers many service options, and it allows clients to proceed at their own pace; many drop in and out of the system before they accomplish their goals. Such a system requires a lot of coordination, and Bridge coordinates very effectively. Careful documentation and regular meetings within and across program components help maintain tight internal communication. On-going in-service training helps staff in different program components to learn about the rationale and approaches other components use. It also keeps all staff updated in areas the agency identified as priorities such as AIDS education and multicultural awareness.

### • Local Context and Need

Bridge is the only agency in the Greater Boston area targeting its efforts to serve homeless youth between the ages of 16 and 24. This is a growing segment of the homeless population; teenagers alone are estimated to account for 4% of Boston's homeless. Long Island Shelter, one of Boston's largest emergency shelters, reports that since 1985 the average age of its guests has dropped from 35 to 31 years old. The fastest growing segment of its guest population is the "under 25" group. In a city where barely half of all entering public school students graduate from high school, most homeless youth are dropouts, with an average 6th - 8th grade reading level.

Bridge has always served runaways, who often move from friend to friend, as well as youth living on the streets, in the parks and on the commons. While the agency developed its own residential programs to help some young adults move off the streets, it had not traditionally done outreach in emergency shelters. The McKinney Grant helped Bridge re-orient its traditional street outreach to reflect the fact that more institutional services are now available to homeless youth, and the youth are using them. In view of the rise of shelters as major gathering place for homeless youth, Bridge decided in November 1988 to send a street outreach worker into Long Island Shelter once a week to make contact with young guests. In January 1989, Bridge also began sending a second outreach worker with a medical team visiting young single mothers living in welfare hotels in Peabody, Malden and Revere.

## Program Vision and Goals

- Vision

Bridge believes that shelter youth have significantly different needs, concerns and attitudes than do older guests; most shelters are not set up to meet their needs. The streetworker finds that young people who are new to the shelters, like those new to the streets, are often frightened and receptive to a way out. Bridge believes that by connecting shelter youth with voluntary programs specifically tailored to young adults, it can help "turn them around" before they get comfortable with shelter life, lose motivation and "stop dreaming."

Bridge's streetworkers carry out a significant component of the program's educational work, although what they do isn't identified as "education." On the street and in the shelters, they pass on to homeless youth information important for their survival and health: drugs and alcohol, HIV, peer relations. Streetworkers also try to build trusting relationships with homeless youth, many of whom have been very damaged by their family relations. Streetworkers try to get kids to think about the patterns in their lives, the causes of problems they face, and whether there's anything they can do about their situation. Streetworkers try to empower youth to make their own choices, and the first step in this is to help kids see that they have choices. Bridge service are introduced as one set of options.

- Program Goals

The McKinney-funded shelter/motel initiative has not focused on drawing shelter youth specifically into Bridge's Education and Pre-Employment program or on offering them some other educational alternative. Bridge's primary goal for shelter outreach has been to motivate young guests to take a first step towards a more stable lifestyle by coming into Bridge services, and eventually leaving the shelters and motels. For some, this might be getting counseling, entering detox or a Bridge residential program; for others, it might be getting a GED and a job.

Bridge's overall goals for guests coming into this program are the same as its goals for all young clients. One staff member summed it up: "Bridge gives a lot of good services, but ultimately what we're talking is relationship-- it's where most of these kids have been damaged. They need to learn to trust; learn about respect and boundaries; learn about caring for themselves and others, and letting somebody else care for them." Homeless youth need to gain self-confidence and feel better about themselves. Bridge uses every contact it has with clients to develop trust and respect, to build their self-esteem. In assisting young adults with basic needs like medical and dental care, Bridge is building trust and helping them feel they are worth helping. This trust and respect will bring them back for more fundamental services like housing, substance abuse treatment, GED classes or job counseling, which in turn are built on this same foundation. Getting all clients into counseling is a Bridge goal; upon intake all participants are assigned to a counselor; however, it is a normally up to clients whether or not they use this counseling service.

- Where Education Fits In

The GED is a powerful symbol for many homeless youth. It represents an ending to something unfinished, perhaps a chance to graduate around the time their friends are graduating from high school. It can open doors to jobs, training programs and college. Finally, it represents a commitment carried through, a confidence-builder, a "positive experience of their potential." Bridge has found that for most homeless youth, entering an education program means making a commitment to the goals of attaining a GED. For some youth, the chance to work towards a GED is a "hook," an initial entry to the Bridge system. For others, it's something they begin to consider after they have been working at Bridge to address other issues.

All Bridge staff emphasize that they see education as essential for long-term success; but they believe that most kids need to "get stable" before they begin to focus on education. Bridge staff are reluctant to refer guests to educational programs before he or she gets somewhat stabilized. They find that in most cases there are underlying reasons why a kid quit high school: family issues, abuse, drug and alcohol problems. In particular, Bridge tries to get clients with drug and alcohol problems to deal first with these issues. Several staff members expressed concern that putting them into education before they did so would be "setting them up to fail." They also don't want a client's initial preference to work on GED to "camouflage" deeper issues.

Bridge staff are also concerned with "readiness"-- that participants in the education program be motivated to follow through and complete their GED's. The shelter outreach worker reported that "the shelter people who go into classes are more likely to be those who have been in different services at Bridge, usually meeting with counselor, rather than quick referrals. A lot of direct referrals aren't ready to go to class."

In view of the agency's concern with getting to deeper problems and making sure clients are ready to success in classes, Bridge does not place incoming students directly into education programs. Rather, it brings them into the agency through the intake system, which is set up to identify and consider the whole range of incoming participants' needs and interests. When a shelter youth (who has probably spoken with the streetworker, used the medical van, or even visited Bridge for a holiday party or a tour with the streetworker) expresses interest in Bridge services, including education, the streetworker makes an appointment for them to meet with an intake counselor at Bridge. All incoming clients are expected to meet with the intake counselor three times so he can determine whether they are ready for classes and will be likely to follow through to complete the GED. They are subsequently assigned to a primary counselor who will follow their progress during the time they are at Bridge, whether or not they choose to be in counseling.

Bridge offers homeless youth a very holistic, supportive approach and a comprehensive array of services. Their educational program offers food for thought in several areas. Staff are considering the issue of where education fits into this: is education an appropriate or effective "hook" (initial entry point) to get kids into agency services, or is education something that comes later? We might also ask: is there a tension between the expectation that clients must be "ready" for education and the agency's effort to use education to build motivation and confidence? Is the risk of "failure" greater than the potential benefits of re-connecting with learning, whether or not that results in immediate progress towards a GED? Finally, by facilitating expanded outreach to shelter youth, the McKinney grant has helped Bridge move in a direction the agency needed and wanted to move, to keep up with a changing youth population. Yet, this program is the only one among the nine McKinney-funded initiatives that has used the grant to supplement existing services– to fund educational services as they have been defined for years rather than to develop new or expanded educational services.

## Distinguishing Characteristics

- Bridge has a long history of providing services to street youth and runaways; it is known and trusted among these groups. The McKinney initiative build on Bridge's long history of working with homeless youth: 1/3 of its regular clients are homeless. The agency has a great deal of knowledge and understanding of what approaches "work" with this population. It has comprehensive knowledge of the kinds of legal, medical, treatment, clothing and other services homeless youth are looking for, and it works to connect them with those resources at Bridge and other agencies.

- Bridge's educational program is well established, with 14 years of experience working with homeless youth. Bridge's Education and Pre-Employment Program has a proven track record of helping street youth attain GED's and to connect with employment, training and further educational opportunities. It links students with an in-house job developer and vocational counselor. It also offers on-site word processing classes.

- Bridge is one of the few Boston agencies that does street outreach. Streetworkers meet youth "on their own turf," in an arena where the youth feels comfortable and has some control. On the street, Bridge staff can engage homeless kids in a person-to-person dialogue– rather than interacting as a service provider with a client. It allows youth to behave as they normally would.

- As part of this initiative, Bridge sends a streetworker once a week to welfare hotels and motels in Malden, Peabody and Revere, where young homeless mothers live with their children. This reaches out to a particularly needy and neglected group of people.

- In addition to street and shelter work, Bridge uses a variety of innovative approaches to familiarize homeless youth with the Bridge facility and programs. They operate a mobile medical van, run a dental clinic, offer haircuts and sponsor holiday parties. The streetworker also takes interested individuals on tours of Bridge, so that they don't have to go there on their own the first time.

- Streetworkers' contacts with street and shelter youth offer an informal educational "curriculum" of its own, although it's not labeled "education." Streetworkers offer a very empowering kind of education, and one that is vital to the agency's success in working with shelter youth. The trusting and respectful relationships streetworkers build with youth are a stepping stone for growth. Providing kids with information on AIDS and other critical concerns can motivate them to want to take care of themselves and to take responsibility for their future. Streetworkers efforts to help young adults reflect on patterns in their lives and to see options and choices they didn't think they had are critical for those individuals to be able to set goals and work towards them.

- Bridge's intake and referral system assures that each client is linked with a primary counselor, who follows the client's progress in different agency programs and who is available for counseling on personal issue, substance abuse and other concerns. This provides a forum for addressing underlying issues that need to be dealt with before homeless youth can move towards more stable lives. It also offers a channel to deal with issues that come up in the classroom: teachers refer students to their permanent counselor to deal with issues that come up– for example, if they notice that a student appears to be battered.

- Bridge offers an unusually comprehensive range of support services to meet clients' short and long-term needs. For shelter youth, access to Bridge's transitional housing and residential programs is one of the most important. This offers them a realistic possibility of moving out of the shelter.

- The Education Program has a carefully documented its activities and procedures in a comprehensive handbook and a set of clear guidelines for developing curricula and educational plans. Documentation helps maintain program quality and continuity.

- Bridge has a strong emphasis on multiculturalism, and this awareness permeates programs and services at all levels. Bridge serves a largely African-American population, and course materials include biographies, novels and history texts focused on African-American people and concerns. The classroom has several posters with quotes from heros like Martin Luther King. People of color hold key staff positions and agency has two Spanish-speaking staff. It also has affiliations with Latino and Chinese community agencies to provide supplementary services to clients from those groups. Staff are screened for their ability to relate to people of other cultures. Pre-service and in-service training focus on further sensitizing staff to their own cultural biases; they are encouraged to give each other honest feedback on cultural issues on an ongoing basis. Bridge is handicapped accessible and one counselor is blind.

- The agency also heavily emphasizes AIDS education for clients and staff. Incoming staff get an orientation on AIDS and the entire staff is updated quarterly on new developments. The agency has developed pamphlets on HIV and AIDS; this information is included in class materials and streetworkers' outreach.

- Instead of a partnership, through its streetworkers Bridge has developed a network of relationships with staff at local emergency shelters and motels. Shelter and motel staff help streetworkers connect with young guests; Bridge offers shelter staff information about serving this particular population, as well as the option for referring them to Bridge services.

- Bridge's case management system offers a holistic and well-coordinated way to track students and monitor their progress through the system. The agency maintains statistics on all program components as a tool for ongoing program assessment and accountability. Monthly review of statistics makes it easy to identify problems, or instances when particular components are not serving those they were meant to serve. A follow-up questionnaire gathers data on students who have left the program.

## Program Strengths

- Educational Facilities: Bridge's Education and Pre-Employment program has a comfortable and well equipped facility. The classroom is bright and inviting, with a wonderful view of Boston Common. Students may smoke and eat in class. A wonderful assortment of books, magazines and other materials is displayed, including popular rock magazines, Our Bodies, Ourselves, People's Drug Book, and Eyes on the Prize. Monthly attendance winners and birthdays are posted. Student artwork is also displayed, and classes do artwork once each month. The Education Program also has a number of computers and printers. Software is available for vocabulary building, reading comprehension, ESL, learning to fill out forms and applications and to complete tax returns. Learners use computers to type up and print their writing, and for publishing journals of their writing.

- High Enrollment: The Bridge program McKinney initiative exceeded its enrollment goals for the first year. It served 34 youths, 10 more than the 24 projeted. In Year 2, Bridge had enrolled 12 students by the end of its first quarter.

- Individualized Education Plan and Schedule: Bridge teachers develop individualized education plans (IEP's) for each student. These plans reflect student goals and their agency treatment plan. Plans map out one page at a time of learning activities to meet short-term goals; students work at their own pace, and may finish this page in a day or in two weeks. This provides a sense of accomplishment, as well as a built-in opportunity for students and teachers to assess learning. Bridge has developed a set of curriculum guidelines to help teachers develop effective and appropriate IEP's for students working at different levels and in different subjects.

  Students set their own class schedule. Bridge encourages them to come in three to five times per week, for a 2-hour class each time (10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.; 2:00 - 4:00 p.m.; or 4:00 - 6:00 p.m.). The program offers 26 hours/week of classes, which offers students the opportunity for a high number of contact hour. Students who are enrolled in Bridge's Residential Program and the City's Jobs for Community Youth program must attend at least four times per week; there is no minimum for shelter youth enrolled through the McKinney grant. In the first quarter of the McKinney's program's second year, nearly all enrolled students attended classes 16-30 hours/month. The most faithful student had attended 98 hours by May.

  Teachers try to create a friendly, caring climate, and to make it possible for students to experience "a success a day." They reinforce student's sense of accomplishment, even for small things like keeping appointments and completing homework. Students can decide whether or not they want to do homework, and can chose from a variety of prepared homework options.

- Student Writing: Writing is well integrated into Bridge's program as a tool for both self-expression and skills development. Students write in "double-entry" journals for at least 15 minutes at the beginning of each class, and teachers respond to each day's entries. Journals offer one way for students and teachers to get to know each other. Students use them to share their world views and their feelings about circumstances in their lives. For days when students are looking for writing topics, teachers have generated a notebook full of thought-provoking questions, pictures and exercises to stimulate their thinking and writing. Many of these address other issues that are very relevant for students such as AIDS, housing, work and childraising. The program holds periodic writing workshops, and also publishes journals of student writing. A Holiday Book of students' poetry, prose and journal excerpts had a strong focus on issues surrounding homelessness.

- Support Services and Linkages: Bridge's education program is able to offer homeless students a wide range of support services to meet their needs and concerns. The link with a primary counselor is a particularly strong support. The counselor can connect students with programs for substance abuse, battering, family problems, parenting, AIDS or other specific problems, as needed. Linkages with vocational counseling, a job developer and pre-employment training are useful to many homeless students. Supplementary tutoring is available, as needed. Bridge also offers help with practical concerns like housing, daycare and transportation and medical care. Regular meetings within and across components assure that students whole range of needs and concerns are addressed.

- Follow Up Network: Bridge streetworkers, teachers and counselors are focused on helping every client to succeed, no matter how long it may take. They expect that most young adults they work with will have setbacks, and are prepared to deal with these. Staff try to develop open and trusting relationships with guests, so that they will feel free to come to them with problems that arise. Students can arrange to take a break from classes when they need to deal with other issues. For guests who stop coming without an explanation, teachers send notes and make calls to as many contact points as they can. The case management system, which keeps information flowing between all agency components, also helps locate them. Streetworkers and peers can take messages to students who don't have an address or phone. The message is supportive and non-threatening: "we're not disappointed in you; we just want you to come back and let us know what's happening with you." In the first year, two students left and returned to the education program. During the site visit, a student who had been in jail came back to start classes.

- Varied Learning Activities and Materials: Bridge's education program offers a competency-based curriculum that focuses primarily on skills and information needed for attaining the GED, as well as on pre-employment skills. Within this framework, Bridge offers a variety of learning activities and materials. Carefully referenced curriculum guides in each subject area and for each skills level combine readings and exercises from a variety of texts, workbooks, novels and articles. Teachers emphasize the importance of using materials that are relevant for students; readings and writing exercises often address current events and issues surrounding homelessness. Bridge has compiled special "kits" in math and social studies that develop skills and knowledge through relevant applications. Kits using maps, graphs and statistics to engage students in understanding and developing solutions for local problems. The program also periodically takes students on field trips to local places of interest such as the freedom trail, George's Island and the science museum.

  Educational software and word processing equipment, described above, supplement traditional instruction. Pre-employment workshops address practical skills like conducting a job search, preparing a resume resume and going on a job interview.

- Teacher/Staff In-Service Training: Bridge offers teachers and other staff extensive opportunities for in-service training. This training created a shared base of understanding across components about the population Bridge serves and about various component activities. Staff training time is scheduled each Wednesday morning, and this time is used to share information in areas to which the agency is committed: AIDS updates, multicultural awareness, trends and issues among homeless youth population and policies affecting them. This time is also used to offer mini-courses on various counseling and treatment approaches, so that the entire staff will understand the rationale underlying client treatment. Besides in-house training, staff are encouraged to attend other relevant workshops and courses. Teachers regularly participate in events at the Adult Literacy Resource Institute.

- Agency Response: Based on this initiative, Bridge has revised its idea of streetwork to include outreach in shelters and motels. The agency has institutionalized what it learned from the program and will continue shelter outreach. It responded flexibly to the limitations of the first year proposal and partnership, and expanded outreach to a variety of Boston's emergency shelters. Bridge has made special efforts to reach young women in shelters, a small minority of shelter residents.

## Concerns and Tensions

- Lack of Development of New or Expanded Educational Services: As an established program experienced in serving homeless youth (which the agency defines as "kids on the streets, in shelters or depending on friends"), Bridge Over Troubled Waters brought to this educational initiative considerable understanding of "what works." They had in place a comprehensive network of staff, resources and support services that included an education component. But beyond expanding outreach, Bridge did not use this funding to develop or test new educational activities or services beyond those it traditionally offered. The McKinney grant has helped Bridge move in a direction in which it needed and wanted to move, in order to keep up with a changing youth population. It is not clear that this grant added to the agency's capacity in any significant way, or that it helped expand a base of knowledge or methods for working with homeless youth.

- Focus on Individualized Classroom Learning: Bridge's Education Program focuses on individualized learning through classroom work leading to the attainment of the GED. Within this framework, the program has developed a range of activities and materials to engage students in meaningful learning; yet, individualized learning neglects the whole dimension of group discussion and interaction. While peer tutoring may happen on occasion, students do not have regular opportunities to learn from each other or have their knowledge validated by peers.

  Addressing homelessness and other meaningful issues, as teacher do in journal writing and other individual activities, could be even more powerful if it included some group learning activities. Classes could more actively help guests confront and work on their problems and addictions. Therapy groups with a clinical focus may be "foreign to the culture of the streets, where these kids cannot afford to be vulnerable," as a Bridge staff member described. But group learning activities are less risky than therapy and support groups; they could help homeless learners develop self-esteem and relationship skills, along with academic knowledge.

- Emphasis on "Readiness" for Education: There is a contradiction between Bridge's attempt to respond to all the needs and interests homeless youth bring, including education, and staff's belief that individuals must be "ready"-- somewhat stable and motivated-- before they re-connect to education. Streetworker offer shelter youth a non-threatening and empowering educational experience; in this case, informal education is a tool for building motivation and confidence. Yet, when it comes to enrolling the same individuals in Bridge's formal "Education Program," many staff believe that the risk of "failure" is greater than the potential benefits of re-connecting with learning.

Staff's fear of "setting kids up to fail" reflects this program's heavy emphasis on the GED. Although the program has expanded to serve individuals who are several years away from attaining the GED, it remains the central focus of classroom activity. (The program does not enroll individuals with reading skill below the 4th grade level; the few clients who fall in this category are referred to ABCD.) If there was less emphasis on the GED as the sign of "success," would it seem less risky to let shelter youth enroll in classes when they want to, whether or not they made rapid progress towards a GED?

- Referrals to Counseling: Participants' link with a primary counselor is a great strength of the Bridge program. Yet, if this linkage results in a sharp boundary between teacher roles and counselor roles, it can make the program less instead of more responsive to students' needs. Clearly, it is important that teachers call students' issues and problems to counselors' attention, and that they encourage students to seek out counseling. At the same time, it could be very alienating for students if teachers feel that it was not their place to discuss issues like abuse, battering, drugs and alcohol with students. This would undermine Bridge's effort to develop trusting and supportive relationships, and would create a very sanitized classroom environment.

## II. PROGRAM DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

### Education Services

- Schedule and Type of Activities

ABE and GED Classes are held at Bridge from:

| | |
|---|---|
| 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. | Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday |
| 2:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m. | Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday |
| 4:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m. | Monday through Friday |

Although word processing classes are usually scheduled in the morning and late afternoon slots, they were discontinued for several months this spring when the program was experiencing a staff shortage. Because the teacher who left was also a part-time Job Developer, Job Development activities and pre-employment workshops also happened less regularly than normal.

Students are free to set their own schedule, although they are encouraged to attend at least three to five classes each week.

A streetworker visits Boston-area shelters at least once each week in the late afternoon and early evening. He usually goes around meal time or shortly after. The streetworkers' informal interactions with shelter youth, and his goals for these, have been described above under program vision and distinguishing characteristics.

- Learner Recruitment and Intake

### Eligibility

This grant support the extension of Bridge's services to youth age 16-24 who are staying in Boston area emergency shelters. Bridge's overall program also includes street youth, runaways who are living with friends, and others in the 16-24 age bracket who are currently involved in an unstable lifestyle.

Bridge Intake workers determine whether a shelter youth who is referred to the program is eligible to enter the education program, or whether he or she should first go through other services. Shelter youth who are currently enrolled in classes were generally enrolled first in other Bridge services– not "quick referral."

Among shelter youth who go to Bridge for services, individuals with drug and alcohol problems are generally expected to work on those problems before being eligible to enroll in classes. The intake counselor also assesses individuals' general "readiness for education" as an eligibility criteria. He meets with prospective students three times to assess their motivation, follow-through and likelihood to complete the GED before he enrolls them in classes. It is mandatory for all students to be assigned to a primary counselor who will follow their progress and be available to them while they are at Bridge; however, participation in counseling is voluntary.

The program accepts students with skill levels from the 4th - 12th grade; most fall in the 8th - 10th grade range. Individuals whose reading skills are below the 4th grade level are not eligible for this program; they are referred to ABCD. The Intake Counselor uses a quick "San Diego" word recognition assessment to identify students who might fall in this category. Those who already have a GED or diploma are only eligible for enrollment in Word Processing and other training programs. The program is open to shelter residents for whom English is a second language; it does not, however, provide intensive ESL instruction. Bridge has two Spanish speaking counselors, and is also affiliated with Allianza to provide supplement services to Latino clients. It is affiliated with Boston Chinese Y.E.S. to work with southeast Asian youth.

Bridge is fully accessible to handicapped individuals. A blind guidance counselor serves can help motivate youth to deal with physical challenges. The program has traditionally referred mentally challenged clients to Massachusetts Rehabilitation.

### Recruitment

Bridge undertook shelter recruitment in November 1988, before it received the McKinney grant. Shelter outreach in Boston has been expanded beyond Long Island Shelter– Bridge's original partner– to include Ft. Point Shelter, Woods-Mullen, Pine Street Inn and various overflow winter shelters. The shelter worker estimates that about 10% of the guests at these facilities fall within the age group Bridge serves. Outreach workers make a large number of contacts for every young adult who decided to inquire at Bridge about services. In the first half of 1989, 40 referrals to Bridge resulted in 24 individuals pursuing services there. This yielded six enrollments in the educational program. In the first quarter of 1990, the education program attempted to enroll 20 individuals who had not enrolled; 12 had enrolled.

As part of this initiative, Bridge also sends a streetworker once a week to welfare hotels and motels on the North Shore, where young homeless mothers live with their children. This female streetworker accompanies a medical van with a doctor and social worker. The doctor and social worker focus on the children, while the Bridge worker focuses on the mothers, most of whom are single teens. These mothers are generally very depressed and preoccupied with survival; staff estimate that only one or two of them have ever come to Bridge for educational or counseling services. Some of them are placed in Bridge's transitional housing for families and access services in that way.

**Intake**

Once an individual has gone through Bridge intake and has been judged to be eligible for the program, he or she goes through intake at the Educational Program. The program schedules group intake monthly, but adds Friday afternoon intake sessions to accommodate homeless youth. Incoming students fill out program registration forms are tested using instruments described below under Students Assessment. Once their skills levels are determined, teachers discuss student goals briefly (there is no instruments or form to record this). Students plan a class schedule, and teachers develop an individual education plan for each student.

- Enrollment and Retention

The Bridge program McKinney initiative reported a high enrollment in its first year: 34 enrollments out of a projected 24. It remained high in the second year; by the end of the first quarter, 12 shelter youth had enrolled, 3 of whom were carried over from the first year. Of these 12 enrollments, 5 left the program before the end of the quarter. In the first year, 6 of 9 students left the program. Two of them eventually came back.

In the second year, about 1/3 of the McKinney students have come in with 4th - 8th grade skills, and 2/3 have come in with 9th - 12th grade skills.

The education component, as a whole, enrolls an estimated 50 kids per month, with about 40 students a year completing their GED.

The unstable nature of shelter kids' lives, and the many other demands of survival, make it difficult to stick to a regular class schedule. Drug and alcohol problems are also major factors influencing contributing to erratic attendance and low retention.

- Learning Activities, Curriculum and Learning Environment

**Learning Activities and Curriculum**

This report has already expressed the opinion that Bridge operates two kinds of educational services: the formal classroom instruction at West Street, and the informal interactions streetworkers have with clients. Streetworkers offer a very empowering kind of education, and one that is vital to the agency's success in working with shelter youth; this has been described extensively above The formal curriculum in Bridge's Education and Pre-Employment Program is competency-based, as discussed above. Formal instruction addresses basic reading, writing and math skills as well as GED preparation. Workshops on pre-employment skills and job development, as well as field trips, are also scheduled periodically.

Classes follow a set format:

- 15 minutes of journal writing;
- 1 1/4 hour of reading (also social studies for some); and
- 1/2 hour of math (also science for some).

The "Program Strengths" section of this report described how Bridge uses individualized education plans. These plans follows specific guidelines developed for each level and skill area; and guidelines discuss philosophy and approach, as well as specific competencies to be addressed. For example, the nine points in the "Guide for Writing Individualized Reading Programs for Levels 4 - 6" include:

1. At this level, all of the students should have at least a little work in the major skill areas: context, details, main idea, and inference. . .
3. Include in the student's program some assignments that are easier than others. Too many challenging materials cause frustration. . .
6. No student should be working at the frustration level (less than 60% correct). . .
8. A student entering at this level, especially at grade probably needs to have immediate experience of success to develop confidence. . . .

The guide goes on to offer a six page list of indexed readings and exercises organized by skill areas and level of difficulty. Similar guides are available for Reading Levels 7-8 and 9-12, and for Social Studies, Science and Math. Students begin taking GED predictor tests in the five subject areas when their skills reach 10th grade level. These predictor tests are useful for identifying particular skill needs.

Curriculum listings draw on a wide variety of materials, including readings and exercises from a variety of texts, workbooks, novels and articles. Teachers emphasize the importance of using materials that are relevant for students; readings and writing exercises often address current events and issues surrounding homelessness. Bridge has compiled special "kits" in math and social studies that develop skills and knowledge through applications to local problems and issues.

Educational software and word processing equipment, described above, supplement traditional instruction. "Word Attack" and "Read and Roll" are popular programs. Teachers help students get set up on the computer, and come back periodically to offer support and reinforcement. Students generally don't spend more than 30-40 minutes of a class on computer instruction.

Student writing has a prominent place in Bridge's educational program, as discussed under "Program Strengths." Journal writing at the beginning of each class offers a channel for students to share their world views and their feelings about circumstances in their lives, and for teachers and students to communicate. Teachers have generated a notebook full of questions, pictures and exercises to stimulate writing, many of which address issues that are very relevant for students. The program holds periodic writing workshops, and also publishes student writing journals.

Pre-employment workshops address practical skills like conducting a job search, preparing a resume resume and going on a job interview. Students who are near completing the GED are referred to a guidance counselor for information on training options and financial aid for further schooling.

**Learning Environment**

Students in the Education Program work separately around several long tables, marked "smoking" and "non-smoking." Two teachers circulate among students, offering help, suggestions or encouragement. Teachers try to create a friendly, relaxed environment where students can feel comfortable but still concentrate on their studies. Students are free to eat and drink while they work. There is some joking and conversation in class, but the overall tone is serious. Students studying at different levels work side by side, each at her or his own pace. They occasionally help each other out, but they don't work together. Teachers believe that mixed classes are particularly helpful for students starting at lower levels, who are years away from completing their GED. Teachers are careful not to frustrate these learners; for example, they don't test them until they are likely to succeed with 70% or better correct.

Bridge's teachers work to create an educational program geared to success to counter students' previous experiences of school failure. They try to make it possible for students to experience their own capabilities-- "a success a day." They use individual education plans to build in benchmarks by which students can measure their progress. Students get immediate corrections and feedback on their work. They maintain their own folders, where they can also observe progress. Students also set their own class schedules and decide when they want to do homework. They can choose their own reading materials, from a wide variety of novels, texts and popular magazines. Many materials address "real life" concerns; for example, Our Bodies, Ourselves, Ourselves, Our Children, People's Drug Book. Program materials reflect Bridge's emphasis on multiculturalism. Many books by African-American writers and books on Black history are prominent.

Teachers are supportive and caring with students: they ask students how their lives are going, and pay attention to their moods. When they can tell a student is having problems-- drugs, alcohol, battering-- they encourage the student to discuss it with her or his counselor. They also call the problem to the counselor's attention. Teachers note that they "don't get into a lot of stuff that counselors do, because they're there for that." Teachers remind students of counseling appointments both orally and with notes in their folders. They also pass on messages from counselors.

- Student Assessment

At intake, teachers administer the "TABE" reading and math tests to a group of as many as 10 incoming students. Students are asked to complete a reading assessment every four months thereafter. The program's individualized planning and record keeping system offers the opportunity for informal daily assessment.

Students begin taking GED predictor tests when they test at the 10th grade level.

Bridge's case management system and tight communication makes it possible to monitor clients' progress through the system.

- Teacher Selection, Training and Support

Bridge teachers are selected in large part for their ability to relate comfortably to all different kinds of people. Through May of 1990, the two teachers were both women in their '20's. One, the Education Program Coordinator, had a training and experience in elementary education. One male teacher left Bridge in early spring, and another started work in mid-May. New teachers have a week-long orientation, including training on priority issues such as AIDS, multicultural awareness, trends and issues among homeless youth population and policies affecting them.

As described under "Program Strengths," Bridge offers teachers and other staff extensive opportunities for in-service training. In addition to weekly training in-house, teachers have the opportunity to attend outside workshops and training sessions.

Although the program uses some tutors, its does not offer them special training. The Coordinator emphasized that she only uses tutors with previous teaching experience and those who are familiar with the agency.

- Learning Outcomes

In a year and a half, Bridge's Education Program has enrolled 18 shelter youth under the McKinney initiative. Seven of those students were enrolled at the time of the May visit. Several had started in the first year and returned to the program. The longest-term shelter enrollee has attended 98 hours of classes.

## Program Organization

- Partnership

As discussed above, there is no formal administrative partnership organizing this program. This program's inter-agency cooperation takes place at the services delivery level and is organized by the streetworkers; it does not seem necessary to formalize it through administrative meetings and agreements. Bridge outreach workers have developed a network of relationships with intake and case management staff at local emergency shelters and motels. Shelter and motel staff help streetworkers connect with young guests; Bridge offers shelter staff information about serving this particular population, as well as the option of referring them to Bridge services.

- Coordination and Management

Bridge holistic approach to serving street youth has spawned a large menu of program options and a complex service delivery system. The agency very effectively uses a case management system to organize its services and to monitor clients' progress through the agency. Careful documentation at all stages, coupled with regular meetings within and across program components, help maintain tight internal communication. On-going in-service training helps develop a team approach and a shared base of knowledge among staff in different program components.

- Support Services

Bridge's education program is able to offer homeless students a wide range of support services to meet their needs and concerns. Regular meetings within and across components assure that students whole range of needs and concerns are addressed.

At Bridge, counseling goes hand in hand with education. Bridge's intake and referral system assures that each client is linked with a primary counselor, who follows the client's progress in different agency programs and who is available for counseling on personal issue, substance abuse and other concerns. Bridge finds that many homeless youth need to address these underlying concerns before they can move forward with their lives. Linkages with vocational counseling, a job developer and pre-employment training are important for many homeless students.

Bridge also offers help with practical concerns like housing, daycare and transportation and medical and dental care. For shelter youth, access to Bridge's transitional housing and residential programs is one of the most important. This offers them a realistic possibility of moving out of the shelter.

Bridge also offers pre-test overnight stays for students who are taking GED tests. The agency will also pay for the test, if necessary. Supplementary tutoring is available top students, as needed.

The Family Life Center offers daycare slots for up to four students while they are attending classes at Bridge; this is helpful, but not always adequate to meet all students' daycare needs. Students who need help with transportation to and from classes can get free subway tokens, although Bridge can't always get the tokens to the students.

The streetworker observed that in his opinion kids who want to get to Bridge can get there; they know how to work the subway system. He believes that support systems are not the key to keeping shelter youth in Bridge's programs; motivation is. If staff can motivate students to keep appointments, to follow through with commitments, then they have a chance of staying in the program.

- Barriers and Incentives to Participation

**Incentives**

Bridge offers a wide array of services to respond to street and shelter youth's needs and goals. They find a supportive environment there, with concerned and non-judgmental adults. Bridge has reputation on the streets, and many kids know someone who has gone into one of its residential programs or who got their GED there. Getting a GED means a lot to many dropouts, and Bridge will help provide transportation, child care and other support services needed to make participation possible.

**Barriers**

For many young people living in shelters, survival needs make it hard to think ahead to the future. This is a particularly severe problem for the motel mothers; for many of them, desperate living conditions are compounded by serious depression. Many also lack confidence in themselves. Their negative family experiences have made it hard for them to trust adults. Problems in school have made it hard to believe that Bridge can make learning interesting or rewarding. The shelter environment in which they are living saps their motivation to work towards an alternative future. Drugs and alcohol problems and a generally low threshold of frustration make it hard to stick with the program.

Bridge's distance from some shelters, like Long Island, is another barrier for some young adults. Bridge does give subway tokens as needed. Bridge's child care slots are also limited: only four children can be left in the Family Life Center at any one time, while their parent uses Bridge Services.

- Transition and Follow-Up

### Transition

Transition is not the same kind of issue for Bridge as it is for many programs. Shelter youth are not necessarily preparing to leave the shelter at the time when they come to Bridge for services. As one staff observed, "it's more like things come up in their lives and distract them." Transition paints too direct and linear a picture of how progress happens in street kids' lives. Setbacks are more the rule than the exception; Bridge is prepared to support clients through these.

### Follow-Up

As discussed under "Program Strengths," Bridge has an exceptionally good follow-up network in place to keep in contact with students who stop coming to class. The Director observed that: "They have a hard time losing us." When students come into class, teachers get from them any addresses and phone numbers where they might be able to be reached. If a student disappears, teachers will send notes and make calls to as many of these contact points as they can. The case management system, which keeps information flowing between all agency components, also helps locate these students. Streetworkers and peers can take messages to students who don't have an address or phone. The message is supportive and non-threatening: "We're not disappointed in you; we just want you to come back and let us know what's happening with you." In the first year,two students left and returned to the education program. During the site visit, a student who had been in jail came back to start classes.

Bridge has also developed a follow-up questionnaire which gathers information about why students have left Bridge, how they felt about the program, and what Bridge may do to support them in their current activities. Questions include:

Why did you lose school?
Why did you want to get your GED?
Why did you choose the Bridge program?
Did you ever go to another GED program, if so what was it?
Which program was better for you and why?
Did you get your GED?
If no, why did you drop out of the Bridge program?
What did/didn't you like best about the Bridge program?
What do you think we could do to make the program better?
Did you go to school or training program after leaving Bridge? (If yes, where?)
What are you doing now? Do you like it?
What are your future plans?
Is there anything Bridge can help you with now?

- Program Assessment

Bridge maintains statistics on all program components as a tool for ongoing program assessment and accountability. Homeless youth and shelter youth are factored out in these reports. Monthly review of statistics makes it easy to identify problems, or instances when particular components are not serving as many homeless and shelter youth as they were meant to serve.

Bridge also includes questions assessing Bridge services, and soliciting client input, on its follow-up questionnaire. Students are asked: whether Bridge served them better or worse than any other GED program they may have attended; what they liked and didn't like about the Bridge program; and what Bridge could do to make the program better.

Based on this initiative, Bridge has revised its idea of streetwork to include outreach in shelters and motels. It responded flexibly to the limitations of the first year proposal and partnership, and expanded outreach to a variety of Boston's emergency shelters. Bridge has made special efforts to reach young women in shelters, a small minority of shelter residents.

- Expansion and Innovation

Although Bridge has institutionalized what it learned from the program and will continue shelter outreach, staff expressed no intention of expanding or revising the program. They did express the hope that the number of childcare slots would be expanded and that shelter outreach efforts would bring increasing numbers of shelter youth into Bridge programs and services.

## III. Recommendations

- Expanded Educational Services: Given that McKinney funds have helped Bridge achieve the goals of expanding outreach to shelters youth, the agency might consider how it could use future funding to expand a base of knowledge and methods for working with shelter youth.

- Diversified Learning Experiences: Bridge mights consider integrating some group learning into its classroom efforts to reinforce peer support and learning. It might also consider whether shelter outreach could be expanded to include other learning activities there.

- Readiness for the Education Program: Bridge should examine its concerns about letting youth immediately undertake classroom work. Are the changes in the focus of the educational program or the kind of support shelter youth get there that would make it less risky to "fail" or experience setbacks in that program?

- Expanded Child Care: If the number of parents who need childcare to be able to attend class is greater than the few the Family Life Center can accommodate, Bridge should seek ways to supplement available child care resources.

- State Support for Sharing Information: The State should consider offering Bridge support for offering information and training to other programs on some particularly effective aspects of its program, including:
    - Its understanding of street youth's needs, and its comprehensive approach to offering them services;
    - Its experience with streetwork and shelter outreach;
    - Its case management, documentation and statistical systems;
    - Its counseling system and approach;
    - Its emphasis on multiculturalism at all levels of the agency;
    - Its approach to AIDS education;
    - Its individualized education plans and guidelines for developing these; and
    - Its integration of writing into the curriculum.

**Evaluation Completed by:** Mary Jo Connelly

**Date of Site Visit:** June 5 and 14, 1990

# V. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations for the Adult Education with Homeless Persons Project arise out of the total data base which composes this evaluation, including both the Learner Survey and the Program Profiles. The following recommendations are specifically premised on the summary findings of the evaluation identified in the "Overview" section of this report, most especially on the finding that adult education programs, provided in concert with shelter services to homeless people, are not just "add on" services, but are central to the effort to connect or reconnect homeless people with the systems, networks and skills that will enable them to live independently. We recommend that the State Coordinator implement the following recommendations, in concert with the SABES regional offices and central clearinghouse when appropriate.

**Partnership**

- Expand the "concept of partnership" beyond the one-to-one shelter/learning provider model.
- Develop the capacity of the learning provider to coordinate adult education services to several shelters.
- Designate staff in the learning provider agency whose "specialty" is homeless education and who will function as the coordinator for education services to shelters.

**Curriculum**

- Research the link between GED, job training, and employment with special attention to people who have lived in shelters. This information will help teachers to understand themselves and to explore with learners what the GED means in practical terms, and what comes after it.
- Address homelessness and related life issues without fear of stigmatizing adult learners who are homeless. Use the life experiences of the learners in the adult education with homeless persons class or tutorial as a cornerstone of "curriculum" or "materials and learning activities". While addressing homelessness in the adult education classroom is not just one thing to be done in just one way, programs might develop a "core curriculum" which addresses the personal, social, and economic forces that create homelessness in a way that is adaptable to each program's needs.
- Respond to the diversity of experience, age, gender, race, ethnicity and parenting status in the learner group through curricula which are designed and adapted to meet the range of people in the Project: from the seventeen year old Hispanic single mother to the fifty year old white woman who lost her job and the forty year old Black man who wants to be able to read to his children.

**Teacher Training and Support**

- Establish a teacher network to develop curricula, and in order to address concerns about roles and boundaries and other issues/challenges that emerge as part of serving homeless learners.

**Race as a Factor in Quality Service Delivery**

- Explore more carefully the racial variable which the learner survey identified: that African-American learners described the support and encouragement of their teachers and counselors as more significantly critical to their enrollment and attendance in class, as well as to their continuing classes after they leave the shelter, than did other groups.

**Transition**

- Build program capacity for developing transition goals for learners. Develop a cadre of "travelling educational advocates" or "ombudspeople" to work on development of transition plans with programs for guests leaving shelters, to facilitate support of program and education center staff, and to advocate for the educational needs of individual learners and the program as a whole. These positions could be staffed by former guests and learners and therefore act as a career ladder or spiral for guests after they leave the shelter.

### Coordinating State Policy Which Affects Homeless People

- Coordinate the policies and program rules of different State agencies which impact homeless people. The State Coordinator of the Project (representing the Department of Education), in concert with selected program representatives and other concerned persons, should host a workshop for representatives of the Department of Public Health, the Department of Public Welfare, and other departments, agencies and programs whose policies affect homeless people. While this would be only a small beginning in the effort to identify and change counterproductive policies and practices, it would be a visible start in a new State administration to "cut waste" and to provide genuinely coordinated services to homeless people.

### Accountability

- Develop local advisory boards with homeless learners as members. Learners currently have limited opportunities to provide feedback about the planning of educational services. The Department of Education's efforts to create a statewide advisory board will begin to address this issue. Local program advisory boards with learner membership would enhance accountability and provide the opportunity for learners interested in advocacy work to apply their skills in their own programs. Stipends could be provided to learners to reinforce the incentive for involvement and to acknowledge work performed.

# APPENDIX A

## Learner Profiles

**LEARNER PROFILE #1: Sue, a 20 year old Black, single mother of one child.**

"Now I can hold my head up and know I am learning something" is the way Sue feels about her schooling this time around. Although Sue is just 20 years old, she and her 2 year old son have learned what it takes to survive. Sue became homeless when she left an abusive relationship in November of 1989. Since becoming homeless, Sue has lived in several different places. Sue was recently "evicted" from her family shelter and is now living in a rooming house. She says that the place is "okay"– they have their own bath but have to share the kitchen. It is only a temporary home, however, while waiting for her 707 certificate to come through.

While her living situation has been unstable, Sue is adamant about coming to classes because she wants to complete her GED so she can provide "a better future for her son." "I don't want no McDonald's job," she told the interviewer, and she sees that furthering her education is the way to do so. Sue stresses that the difference between her schooling before and now is that the teacher is making sure she learns something. Sue knows the teacher is concerned about her well-being.

Sue wants to continue her schooling until she completes her GED and is hoping to continue with a job training course in computers and word processing. Sue is currently looking for work and is determined to see that her son has "a good life."

**LEARNER PROFILE #2: Luis, a 38 year old Hispanic male.**

Luis recently sent for his high school transcripts from Puerto Rico and received a letter stating that they had been destroyed. Looking back on his education, Luis decided to start over and take ESL classes towards an American GED. He decided that this was the best educational route for him because years of drinking made him forget most of what he learned in Puerto Rico. He needed to learn some things again.

Luis has lived in and out of shelters since 1983. He rented rooms in rooming houses, but retreated to the shelters to get away from the ever-present drugs and alcohol. Luis reported that he is an alcoholic and supported his habit by working labor jobs, mostly in restaurants. Close to a year ago, Luis decided to seek help for his alcoholism. He entered a substance abuse treatment facility and several months ago graduated from a halfway house. He is now living in the shelter while waiting for appropriate shelter.

He entered the education program through the shelter and is pleased with the progress he has made so far. He confidently says: "I am better able to communicate with people." He was proud that last week he was able to write a note to somebody. Luis stressed the importance of the program to those at the shelter, saying that it gives people the opportunity to do something with their lives. Education is important to Luis. He wants to learn more. He would like to someday go to college and become a counselor so that he can give back some of what he has been given.

**LEARNER PROFILE #3: Helen, a 52 year old white, single female.**

"One of the hardest things about being homeless is that suddenly you are put into a situation where you have to live with other people, some of whom you may not like, and you have to get along with these people or you sleep on the streets." This is how Helen describes living in a shelter. "We sometimes get on each others nerves, but for the most part we get along."

Helen was born and lived her entire life in the community where she is now homeless. She graduated from high school and became a secretary/receptionist. Last year she was laid off after 24 years with the same company. She began working with temporary agencies, but found that her skills needed to be updated. The jobs were few and far between and in the spring she was evicted from her apartment for non-payment of rent.

She found out about the education program through the shelter and was given the opportunity to take a word processing course through the adult education center. Helen realizes that her situation is tough: being a middle aged woman, not yet eligible for social security. She needs and wants to work so she can again support herself and become a contributing part of the community she has lived in for over 50 years.

**LEARNER PROFILE #4: Jan, a 43 year old white, divorced mother of two children.**

"The most important thing in life is education; without education you are almost worthless. I can see what the future is coming to with everyone dropping out (of school)." Jan is a 43 year old divorced mother of two children, ages 20 and 16. After relocating, Jan became homeless. She is now living in her own apartment with her 16 year old son. She became involved with the education program at the shelter when she volunteered to babysit for the mothers involved in the program. She then began working with the teacher.

One of the reasons Jan decided to enroll in the program was that she feels comfortable with the teachers and staff. She feels she can trust them. "The teacher takes time to be with each student. She gave me the confidence to come back again. She teaches me and I teach her. She gives me a lot of support and encouragement." Jan is currently working on her reading and spelling and, most importantly to her, math, so that she is able to balance her checkbook.

Jan reported that her son has been thinking about dropping out of school and this concerns her. She said that he has two role models, another person who is educated, and herself. She feels that if she continues her education he will see the importance of school and finish.

**LEARNER PROFILE #5: Pam, a 36 year old Black, single mother of four children.**

Pam graduated from high school in the Boston area and completed a training program for secretarial skills and computer training. She obtained a job with a company as a clerk/typist. A year and a half ago she left on maternity leave and three months ago was evicted from her apartment when her landlord decided to renovate the apartment.

Pam hopes to get an apartment soon and wants to "better herself." She enrolled in the program to be able to help her children with schoolwork. She also wants to "gain knowledge about what she doesn't know."

She enjoys the education program because "being homeless is hard." The program "gives you something useful and rewarding" while you are in the situation of being homeless.

Pam indicated that housing was the most important service she needed right now, but that once she obtains her housing she will continue her computer classes and start looking for a job again.

She knows how important education is for her and her children. She wants to set an example for her children so they will "never have to experience homelessness again."

**LEARNER PROFILE #6: John, a 25 year old white, single male.**

John says that "education is important in a person's future." He feels it is the first step in obtaining a decent job. He also feels strongly that there needs to be more incentive for people to join the education program at the center because "there are a lot more people out there who need to learn."

John dropped out of school in 9th grade because he was "not interested anymore" and began working day labor jobs. Since 1988 he has lived in and out of shelters while trying to make money doing different trades. He heard about the program through the shelter and decided to give it a try, primarily because he couldn't afford to enroll in an adult learning center on his own.

Just a week before he completed the interview, John took the GED test and passed. He is now waiting for his certificate. He also obtained a full-time job with a landscaping company. John is looking into starting college classes in the fall and is interested in business classes.

John said that while the program is there for the benefit of everyone, an individual ultimately must make the decision to better his/her education – and then stick to that decision.

**LEARNER PROFILE #7: Stacy, a 22 year old white, married mother of one child.**

For Stacy, her husband Greg (who is ten years older than she), and their eight month old daughter, Alyssa, becoming homeless was the result of falling behind in their rent– by one month. After being evicted, this young family spent a few weeks with friends trying to save enough money to get another place of their own, but one night, without notice, the friends told them they had to leave. After spending a night in a motel, paid with a good chunk of the paycheck Greg had just received, and a night with cousins, the Department of Public Welfare referred them to a family shelter. Neither Stacy nor Greg had finished high school, but Stacy had finished tenth grade and had completed a GED course in Virginia some years back. (She got sick and never took the test.) When the intake counselor at the shelter told her about the education program offered through the shelter, she leapt at the chance to go back to school. The education program turned out to be the one redeeming experience of life at the shelter, and something she has continued to benefit from, as long as six months after leaving the shelter.

Stacy says that being homeless and living in a shelter is the most humiliating experience she has ever had. Not only did the fact of being homeless put a terrible strain on her marriage (Greg was so depressed and angry about not being able to provide for his family that he became difficult to talk to), but the structure of life at the shelter made them feel alternately like children or like criminals. Despite the shelter staff's best attempts to balance the need for rules in a home for many families with respect for individual family needs, Stacy and her family felt belittled by the early curfews, regulations on child care, and constant monitoring and documenting of daily activities. ("I was ready to get a divorce living in that shelter," Stacy said.) In the classroom, however, Stacy had a different experience. She forged a strong relationship with her teacher, uncovered her self confidence and renewed her love of photography. She decided to get her GED, and to follow that with technical training as a photographer. Stacy will be completing the GED in a few weeks and then will begin the enrollment process at her local community college.

Stacy is trying to get Greg to take a GED course but she says that he's still so embarrassed by his lack of basic skills that he can't take the first step. She thinks that she is luckier than he because she knows she loves to learn. And she knows that the only piece of luck to come from the experience of being homeless and living in a shelter for two months was enrolling in the shelter's education program. She clearly stated that she would not be in an education program now if the shelter hadn't made the link for her. She is equally clear that "the first shelter was the last shelter." She is convinced that her education will pave the way to greater self sufficiency and greater personal and family

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happiness. "If you don't have education, you'll end up in a homeless shelter time after time."

# APPENDIX B

Learner Survey Protocol
Survey Guide for Teachers
Site Visit Protocol

**The Stone Center, Wellesley College**
ADULT EDUCATION WITH HOMELESS PERSONS
LEARNER SURVEY
May 1990

Code #_______

There's No Place Like Home

Thank you for helping us to evaluate your education program.

This is the first time in Massachusetts, and perhaps in the country, that homeless people are being asked to give your opinions about the role of education in shelter services.

We hope that you will answer the questions in this questionnaire carefully. Policy makers and funders will read about your answers in our final report.

All your answers are confidential.

## Part I: EVALUATION OF INSTRUCTION

1. How long have you been in the program? (Please check one.)
   - ☐ Less than 1 week
   - ☐ 1 to 3 weeks
   - ☐ 4 to 8 weeks
   - ☐ 9 to 12 weeks
   - ☐ More than 12 weeks
     - If more than 12 weeks, how long?______________________

2. Is this your first time in this program? (Please check yes or no.)
   - ☐ Yes
   - ☐ No
     - How many times have you been in the program before?
       - ☐ Once
       - ☐ Twice
       - ☐ More than twice
       - ☐ If you have been in the program more than once, please tell us why you left and why you came back each time.________

3. How did you find out about the program?
   - ☐ I read a brochure.
   - ☐ A friend told me about it.
   - ☐ An outreach worker told me about it.
   - ☐ A shelter counselor told me about it.
   - ☐ Other (Please explain.)______________________________

4. Why did you enroll in the program? (Please check all that are true for you and add your own answers at the end.)
   - ☐ Because English is my second language and I want to speak it better
   - ☐ To get my GED
   - ☐ To read better
   - ☐ To write better
   - ☐ To do math better

☐ To help my children with their schoolwork
☐ To read to my children
☐ To fill out housing or benefit applications
☐ To get a driver's license
☐ To get a job
☐ To get a better job
☐ To read the Bible
☐ To read the 12 Steps
☐ To be with my friends
☐ To have something to do
☐ To better myself in general
☐ Because someone encouraged me
  - Who encouraged you?
    ☐ A friend
    ☐ A shelter counselor
    ☐ An outreach worker
    ☐ Other person (Please describe who encouraged you.)____
    ____________________

☐ Other reasons for enrolling in your program. (Please add your own reasons.)
1.) ____________________
2.) ____________________
3.) ____________________
4.) ____________________

5. Is the program giving you what you expected?
☐ Yes
  - What did you expect to get from the program?____________
  ____________________
  ____________________

☐ No
  - Why not?____________________
  ____________________
  ____________________

6. Is the program giving you something you didn't expect?
☐ Yes
  - What is it giving you that you didn't expect?____________
  ____________________
  ____________________

☐ No

7. What are you studying? (Please check all that are true for you and add your own answers at the end.)
   - ☐ Reading
   - ☐ Writing
   - ☐ Math
   - ☐ English Vocabulary
   - ☐ GED
   - ☐ Other things I am studying are:
     1.) ____________________
     2.) ____________________
     3.) ____________________
     4.) ____________________

8. Is there something about your program that you especially like?
   - ☐ Yes
     - What is it and why do you like it? ____________________
       ____________________
       ____________________
       ____________________
   - ☐ No

9. Is there something about your program that you would like to change?
   - ☐ Yes
     - What is it? ____________________
       ____________________
       ____________________
   - ☐ No

10. Do you see changes in yourself and in your life as a result of what you are learning in your program? (Please check all that are true for you and add your own answers at the end.)
    - ☐ Yes
      - ☐ I read better.
      - ☐ I write better.
      - ☐ I do math better.
      - ☐ I have more confidence in myself.
      - ☐ I am excited about learning and I want to learn more.
      - ☐ I know how to ask for help when I need it.
      - ☐ I am not so embarassed by what I don't know.
      - ☐ I can manage my relationships with service agencies better.
      - ☐ I have friends who understand me and my situation.
      - ☐ I feel that I have a future which I have some control over.

- ☐ I am looking for work.
- ☐ I am working.
- ☐ I read to my children.
- ☐ I am meeting my educational goals.
  Which goals have you met? (You can go back to question 4 to remind yourself about how you stated your goals.)
  1.) ______________________________
  2.) ______________________________
  3.) ______________________________
  4.) ______________________________
- ☐ Other changes you see in yourself and in your life as a result of what you are learning in your program:
  1.) ______________________________
  2.) ______________________________
  3.) ______________________________
  4.) ______________________________

☐ No changes in myself or in my life as a result of what I am learning.

11. Do you like having your program be a part of shelter services?
    ☐ Yes (Please explain your answer.)______________________________
    ______________________________
    ______________________________
    ☐ No (Please explain your answer.)______________________________
    ______________________________
    ______________________________

12. Would you be in an education program at this time in your life if you had to go to an adult education center on your own?
    ☐ Yes (Please explain your answer.)______________________________
    ______________________________
    ______________________________
    ☐ No (Please explain your answer.)______________________________
    ______________________________
    ______________________________

13. Is it hard for you to go to your program sometimes? (Please check all that are true for you and add your own answers at the end.)
    ☐ Yes
    - What makes it hard?
      - ☐ I don't want to leave my children for long periods of time.
      - ☐ There is no daycare.
      - ☐ The daycare services are not good enough.

☐ Transportation is a problem.
☐ I've been sick.
☐ I have other appointments which are important to keep.
☐ I work some days.
☐ Life in the shelter makes it hard-- for example someone kept me up all night, or someone stole my clothes.
☐ Other things that make it hard to go to the program:
1.) ______________________________
2.) ______________________________
3.) ______________________________
4.) ______________________________

☐ No, it's not hard to go to the program.

14. Do you think that you will continue an educational program after you leave the shelter?
☐ Yes
- What would help you to continue after you leave the shelter?
  ☐ Good daycare services
  ☐ Transportation
  ☐ Ongoing support from teachers/tutors
  ☐ Ongoing support from friends in the class
  ☐ Other things that would help you to continue taking classes or tutoring after you leave the shelter:
  1.) ______________________________
  2.) ______________________________
  3.) ______________________________
  4.) ______________________________

- What kind of education program would you like to enroll in after you leave the shelter?
  ☐ ABE class
  ☐ GED class
  ☐ ESL class
  ☐ Tutoring
  ☐ On the job training
  ☐ Vocational education class
  ☐ College
  ☐ Other kinds of classes you would like to take after you leave the shelter:
  1.) ______________________________
  2.) ______________________________
  3.) ______________________________
  4.) ______________________________

☐ No, I don't think I will continue in an education program.
Why not?

15. On a scale of 1 to 3, how important is education compared to other services you need ? Please circle number 1, 2 or 3.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 |
| not very important | important | very important |

## Part II: Demographics

1. Are you? (Please check one.)
   - ☐ Male
   - ☐ Female

2. How old are you? ______years

3. Where were you born? ____________________(Name of the country and state you were born in)

4. What racial or ethnic group do you consider yourself a part of?
   - ☐ African American
   - ☐ White
   - ☐ Hispanic
   - ☐ Japanese
   - ☐ Haitian
   - ☐ Chinese
   - ☐ Laotion
   - ☐ Other ____________________
   - ☐ Cambodian
   - ☐ Hmong
   - ☐ Korean
   - ☐ Capeverdean
   - ☐ Vietnamese
   - ☐ Portuguese
   - ☐ Greek
   - ☐ Armenian
   - ☐ Russian
   - ☐ Asian Indian
   - ☐ French Canadian
   - ☐ Italian
   - ☐ Native American Indian

5. What language do you speak most of the time?
   - ☐ English
   - ☐ Spanish
   - ☐ Portuguese
   - ☐ Creole
   - ☐ Other________________________________________

6. How long have you lived in the United States?
   - ☐ Under 6 months
   - ☐ 6 months to l year
   - ☐ Over l year but less than 5 years
   - ☐ 5 to 10 years
   - ☐ Over 10 years
   - ☐ Since birth

7. How long have you lived in Massachusetts?
   - ☐ Under 6 months
   - ☐ 6 months to l year
   - ☐ Over l year but less than 5 years
   - ☐ 5 to 10 years
   - ☐ Over 10 years
   - ☐ Since birth

8. Are you?
☐ Married
☐ Separated
☐ Living together
☐ Single
☐ Widowed
☐ Divorced
☐ Other____________

9. Do you have children? ☐ Yes ☐ No

10. If yes, how many?______
What are their ages? ________________________________

11. How many of your children are living with you? _______

12. Are you taking care of anyone else's children? ☐ Yes ☐ No

13. If yes, how many?______
What are their ages? ________________________________

14. Where have you usually slept in the last six months?
☐ Own apartment
☐ With family
☐ With friends
☐ Rooming house
☐ Hotel/motel
☐ Shelter
☐ Subway, streets, parks, woods
☐ Other______________________________________________

15. Where are you living now?
☐ Own apartment
☐ With family
☐ With friends
☐ Rooming house
☐ Hotel/motel
☐ Transitional housing
☐ Shelter
☐ Subway, streets, parks, woods
☐ Other______________________________________________

16. If you are living in a shelter, is this the first shelter you've lived in?
☐ Yes
☐ No

17. What was the date you first used any shelter?________________
Did other shelters you have stayed in have an education program?
☐ No
☐ Yes
Did you participate in it? If no, why not?______________
______________________________________________
______________________________________________
______________________________________________
______________________________________________

18. Why did you leave your last permanent home?
☐ Financial reasons
☐ Fire
☐ Eviction
☐ Relocation
☐ Family problems
☐ Emotional problems
☐ Job problems
☐ Other reasons:____________________________________
______________________________________________
______________________________________________

19. What is your main source of income?
☐ Employment
☐ Spouse
☐ Other family
☐ Public Assistance
If you are receiving public assistance, which do you receive?
☐ AFDC
☐ WIC
☐ Medicaid
☐ Emergency Assistance
☐ Unemployment
☐ General Relief
☐ Food Stamps
☐ SSI
☐ SSDI
☐ Veteran's Benefits
☐ Other kind of public assistance____________________

☐ Other kinds of financial support (Explain)

20. Are you working now?
☐ Yes
•What is your job?
☐ Full time ☐ Part time
☐ No

21. Have you worked in the past?
☐ Yes
☐ No

22. What kind of work do you usually do?

23. Are you looking for work now?
☐ Yes
• What kind of work are you looking for?

• Would you like help looking for work?
☐ Yes ☐ No
If yes, what kind of help?

If no, why don't you want help?

☐ No

24. Please circle the last year of school you completed.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 GED
Other

25. Where did you attend school? (Name city, state and country.)
________________________________________

26. Have you ever been in an adult education program before?

☐ Yes

If yes:

- What program?____________________________
- How long did you stay in the program?________________
- Why did you leave the program?____________________

☐ No

27. Is there anything else that you would like to tell us about yourself and about your program?____________________________

**Thank you again for your participation in this evaluation. The results of the evaluation will be available at the end of July.**

## The Stone Center, Wellesley College
ADULT EDUCATION WITH HOMELESS PERSONS
Teacher/Tutor Training for Learner Survey and Interview
May 9, 1990

### I. Learner Survey

Goals of the Learner Survey:
1.) For learners to understand the context of the evaluation and to feel invested in doing a good job with us, for us and for themselves
2.) To collect complete and comprehensive data from each learner
3.) To use the survey as a class curriculum

Methods for Conducting the Learner Survey:
1.) **It is important to introduce the survey.** Please let your learners know that this is the first time in Massachusetts that homeless people are being asked to give their opinions about the importance of educational services and that their opinions will be written up in our final report. This is a good opportunity to share with the group some of the history and goals of your project as a whole-- include something about the partnership between agencies, for example. This kind of information can only increase the sense of ownership of their program among the learners. Emphasize that what people write here will influence future program development, so it's important to be truthful and complete. (There is a statement about the background/purpose of the survey on the front page of the survey. This might be repetitive with how you introduce the survey, but the repetition is a good thing, we think.)

2.) **Teachers/tutors help learners to read questions and write their answers**. Our hope is to make the survey as friendly as possible. You can use whatever methods you usually employ in your class/tutorial to help learners read the questions and write their answers. You may also want to use some of the following methods which teachers and tutors have used in other program surveys.

- Read each question out loud to/with the class, or have one learner read the question out loud. Then everyone answers that one question for him/herself. This encourages discussion about the question and helps to insure that everyone understands the question. Proceed through the questionnaire, one question at a time.
- If you have a small group and your learners have trouble reading and writing, you can work with them individually.
- It's up to you to decide to give the demographics section or the evaluation of class section first. The idea that informs the survey as it is currently printed is that it is better for learners to become engaged in answering meaningful questions first and then move to the "objective"

demographics. Some people argue that it is better to introduce the learner to the survey through the demographics.

- Use one or two class/tutorial periods, as needed for your learners.

3.) **We have designed one survey and one interview for a diverse group of learners.** Some are in ESL classes; others are preparing for the GED. Some are living in shelters; others are in transitional or permanent housing; still others might be living on the street. With your input we have tried to make all the questions applicable to all groups of learners. But something may have escaped our attention. **If, in the process of conducting the survey, it appears that a question is not applicable to a learner, simply instruct the learner to write-in "not applicable."**

4.) Please keep the completed surveys until the interviewer arrives to conduct the interviews with selected learners. The interviewer will gather the surveys from you.

## II. Learner Interview

Goal of the Learner Interview:

1.) To supplement the survey data collection with anecdotal data, through discussion of interview questions with learners

Methods for Conducting the Learner Interview:

1.) **The interview is the same as the survey, except for the opportunity for the learner and interviewer to discuss the learner's answers to each question.** We will conduct interviews with 2 learners in each program who have also completed the survey. To the best of your ability, **please select two learners who are representative of your learner group, and who you think will be comfortable speaking with us.**

2.) **It is up to you and your program to decide whether to pay the interviewees twenty dollars each or to use the money for the group**. For bookkeeping reasons, payment has to be made by check to the learning provider/shelter agency and then the Director/designee will disburse the funds. The interviewer will bring the check with her on the day she conducts the interviews.

3.) **Amy Knudsen and Laura Sperazi will conduct the interviews.** One of them will call you to confirm the scheduling we discuss today. The interviews can take from one to one and a half hours.

Please feel free to call Laura if you have any question about the survey or interview at (617) 235-0320 X2838.

# The Stone Center, Wellesley College
# Adult Education for the Homeless Pilot Project Evaluation:
# Individual Site Documentation--Overview 1990

## I. Purposes of the Site Visit/Documentation

A. To assemble and verify data/information pertaining to program planning, start-up and implementation

B. To examine program goals and objectives, activities, anticipated/unanticipated outcomes, barriers full program implementation and other organizational issues of particular concern to each program which are evidenced in program operations.

C. To use this information in writing a program profile and final report. The profile and report will assist program staff in assessing this year's program and identify directions for future growth and development.

New Programs will have a one day site visit; old programs will have a two day site visit. The schedules outlined below are intended only to give an idea of the sequence of interviews, group discussions, and observations which make up a site visit. The schedule for the site visit to your program will accomodate your program's schedule, the organization and staffing patterns of your agencies, and other individual program neeeds.

## II. Proposed Schedule for a One Day Site Visit to New Programs

**Day 1:**

9:00.....Interview(s) of Program Coordinator/Key Background Person(s)
11:30...Review of Written Materials/Tour of the Program/Shelter
12:00...Working Lunch/Group Interview with Key Staff
1:00.....Individual Interviews with Key Staff, including Shelter and Learning Provider Staff
3:00.....Observation of Class(es)/Tutorial(s)
4:00.....Interview(s) with Teacher(s)/Tutor(s)
5:00.....Wrap-Up with Program Coordinator/Others

## III. Proposed Schedule for a Two Day Site Visit to Old Programs

**Day 1:**

9:00.....Interviews of Program Coordinator/Key Background Person(s)
12:00...Review of Written Materials/Tour of the Program/Shelter
1:00.....Working Lunch/Group Interview with Key Staff
2:30.....Individual interviews with Key Staff, including Shelter and Learning Provider Staff
5:00.....Wrap-up Day 1

**Day 2**

9:00.....Interviews with Teacher(s)/Tutor(s)
11:00....Observation of Class(es)/Tutorial(s)
12:00...Lunch with Teachers/Learners
1:30......Observation of Class(es)/Tutorial(s)
2:00......Discussion with Key Staff of Identified Organizational Needs
5:00......Wrap-Up with Program Coordinator/Others

## IV. Methodology

The combination of methods to be used during the site visit include:

A. Review of written materials, especially

- Proposals
- Memoranda of agreement
- Intake forms
- Curricula and other educational materials
- Monitoring forms/processes
- Minutes from key meetings
- Quarterly reports
- Recruitment materials
- Assessment tools/materials
- Staff development materials
- Student folders
- Other ______________

B. Interviews with administrative, teaching and support staff and adult learners in both a group and individual format

C. Observation (unobtrusive as possible) of classroom and other key activities

# The Stone Center Wellesley College
# Adult Education for the Homeless Pilot Project Evaluation: Individual Site Documentation -- Program Fact Sheet 1990

Please complete the Program Fact Sheet and send it to the Evaluator before your site visit. The information which you provide in the Program Fact Sheet will help the Evaluator to become familiar with your program and will save time and facilitate an easy flow of conversation and discussion on the day of the site visit. Please use additional paper if you need it to answer the questions fully.

**Program Name:** ______________________________

**Program Address:** ______________________________

______________________________

______________________________

**Program Partners:**
Learning Provider: ______________________________
Shelter: ______________________________
Other Partner(s): ______________________________

______________________________

**Contact Person(s):**

| | Name | Phone |
|---|---|---|
| Program Coordinator: | | |
| Shelter Provider | | |
| Learning Provider | | |

**Program Start-Up Date:** ______________________________

**Current Phase of Development:** (Start-up; partial implementation; full implementation; other. Please explain.))

______________________________

______________________________

______________________________

______________________________

______________________________

______________________________

______________________________

**Major Program Goal(s):**

**Key Program Objectives(s):**

**Overall Program Design** (Basic Elements; Educational Emphasis, Exemplary Features)

**Overall Program Philosophy** (Key Beliefs; Approach to Service Delivery; etc.)

**Target Population(s):**
(Do you target any particular population, for example, families, youth, single people, etc.? Please describe your target population and their particular need for education services)

**Learner Data:**
(Do you collect information on each of the following? If yes, please summarize your learner data for each item. If no, please let us know why you do not have data. For example: "This is not important to our program", "This is important but we haven't gotten around to collecting this data yet", etc.)

•Gender (Numbers of women/men)

•Race and Ethnicity (Numbers of: Black, White, Hispanic, Asian, Native American and Other People--specify others if you serve a particular group not listed here)

•Age (under 20; 20 to 30; 31to 40; 41 to 50; 51 to 60; over 60)

•Attendance in class/tutorial: (Do you record attendance rates? How is attendance?)

- Length of stay in education program: (How long are your learners staying in your program?)

- Rate of return to education program: (Do learners leave and then return?)

- Numbers and types of referrals made to other agencies/services:

- Follow-up contacts:

- Numbers of learners who have completed program (Please explain what your program means by completion)

**Program Schedule**:

- Actual hours per day/per week of services offered. (Note days and hours)
  1. Instruction
  2. Counselling
  3. Training
  4. Group meetings
  5. Other
- Preferred/ideal amount of time per day/week/cyle of instruction

**Administrative and Personnel Structure** (Brief description of roles, responsibilities, age, race/ethnicity, gender, languages spoken and experience working with homeless people)

- Administrators: (Program Director, Coordinator, Other)

- Teachers: (Please include wages, if benefits are offered, if prep time is paid or unpaid)

- Counsellors:

- Others:

**Relationship of Program to Larger Community and Resources** (Please include, if possible, a general description of: the resource(s); the quality of the resource(s); the availability and frequency of use; and how--if at all--each of the community resources translates into direct support for the program.)

**Consideration of Special Populations and Special Issues** (Does your program pay special attention to any of the following populations and/or issues? Please explain.)

•Women (e.g., parenting,; discrimination, etc):____________________

•Racial or Ethnic Groups (e.g., awareness of cultural differences, discrimination, etc.):____________________

•Physically challenged (e.g., pyhsical access, discrimination, etc.)__________

•Other:____________________

## FOR OLD PROGRAMS ONLY

Please identify and describe the four most important issues/concerns in your adult education for the homeless program which you would like the evaluator to pay special attention to during the course of the site visit. Your full explanation of these issues on the program fact sheet will assist the evaluator in planning the site visit as well as the focus of the interview questions and the program observations.

1.)

2.)

3.)

4)

# The Stone Center Wellesley College
# Adult Education for the Homeless Project Evaluation
## Individual Site Documentation -- For Use by Evaluation Staff
## 1990

(General Instruction: Use the information submitted on the program fact sheets to probe specific interests and concerns of each program)

## I. History/Background

**A. When/how/why did you and your agency become involved in adult education for the homeless?** (Probe: Is this the first time you and your agency have been involved in this kind of program; any expectations for the challenges this kind of project might pose)________________

**B. What are your most important program and learner goals and objectives?** (Allow one or more open-ended answers and then probe for goals regarding **partnership**, **curriculum**, and **transition**. For each goal described, ask if there have been any changes in focus or definition since program began. If yes, ask what are the changes and why were they initiated. )

•Open ended answer #1________________

•Open ended answer #2________________

•Partnership________________

- Curriculum

- Transition

**C. Is there a mesh between your goals, the goals of your partner agencies and between your partnership and the State oversight agency, or are there differences?**

## II. Coordination of Services

Please describe in detail the following aspects of your program and discuss 1.) any significant accomplishments/successes achieved thus far and 2.) any problems/barriers encountered in implementing your program objectives.

**A. Educational Services: (For Administrators and Teachers/Tutors)** (Ask: Which services do you offer? Are these the categories you use to describe your services or do you describe your services differently?)

- **ABE** (Probe: What does your program mean by ABE? What skills do you include in it? Reading, writing, life skills, goal setting, group skills, self esteem, etc.)

Successes/accomplishments

Problems/barriers

•**GED** (Probe: What does your program mean by GED? What skills do you include in it? Reading, writing, life skills, goal setting, group skills, self esteem, test taking, etc.)

Successes/accomplishments

Problems/barriers

•**ESL** (Probe: What does your program mean by ESL? What skills do you include in it? Reading, writing, American life skills, goal setting, group skills, self esteem, etc.)

Successes/accomplishments

Problems/barriers

•**Parenting Skills Classes** (Probe: What does your program mean by Parenting skills? What skills do you include in it? Reading, writing, family life skills, goal setting, group skills, self esteem, etc.)

Successes/accomplishments

Problems/barriers

•**Prevocational Training** (Probe: What does your program mean by prevocational training? What skills do you include in it?)

Successes/accomplishments

Problems/barriers

•**Other** (Specify and then probe: What does your program mean by ________? What skills do you include in it? Reading, writing, life skills, goals setting, group skills, self esteem, etc.)

Successes/accomplishments

Problems/barriers

**B. Support Services** (Probe: Which support services do you offer? Are these the categories you use to describe your services or do you describe your services differently? Which are the most important for access to/participation in your program, and how do you assess this?)

•**Daycare** (Describe services, location, hours, utilization, etc.)

Successes/accomplishments

Problems/barriers

•**Counseling** (Specify kind of counseling, e.g., educational, other)

Successes/accomplishments

Problems/barriers

•**Transportation** (Specify kind of transportation, utilization, etc.)

Successes/accomplishments

Problems/barriers

•**Other** (Specify other kind of support service)

Successes/accomplishments

Problems/barriers

## III. Program Components

**A. Recruitment and Retention of Learners** (Describe your overall recruitment and /retention strategies.and your overall successes and problems)

Successes/accomplishments

Problems/barriers

Probe: 1.) How is eligibility for your program determined?

Probe: 2.) Which group(s) do you target? Are you recruiting them?

Probe: 3.) Any new outreach to people not yet served? Any street outreach?

Probe: 4.) How does your program assure access to physically or mentally challenged people? To linguistic minorities?

Probe: 5.) What percentage of your contacts do you not enroll? Why do you think this happens and do you have a way to find out more about why?

Probe: 6.) What is your retention rate? Do you know why people drop out? Have you had any re-enrollments?

**B. Assessment of Learners (For Administrators and Teachers/Tutors)**

•**Educational Assessment** (Describe your assessment tools and approaches for pre, during, and post enrollment. Include standardized and other tests, intakes, interviews, observations, etc.)

Successes/accomplishments

Problems/barriers

•**Other Areas of Assessment** (What other areas do you think are important to assess as measures of learner and program success? For example, increased self confidence; increased social skills like keeping appointments or initiating discussions in class; expressing desire to continue participation in educational program,etc.)

How would you/do you go about measuring changes in those areas?

**C. Creating an Adult Learning Environment/Teaching Methods (For Administrators and Teachers/Tutors)**

(Describe classroom/tutorial space, efforts to create congenial environment; and all methods used to insure interest and participation of learners.)

Probe specifically for:

- Peer tutoring or any other way of developing peer support and assistance?
- Group learning. Does your program use group learning Why or why not?
- Group identification. Does your program foster a sense of group identification around homelessness, single parenting, etc.?
- Dealing with strong emotions in the classroom. Is this a concern? If yes, how do you deal with it?

Successes/accomplishments

Problems/barriers

**D. Selecting/Designing Curriculum (For Administrators and Teachers/Tutors)**

What curriculum do you use?

- What kinds of learning goals does your curriculum address? (Probe: What framework, philosophy of education, values, etc. this reflects including functional reading, writing, life skills; interactive skills at the individual and "working the system" level; critical/reflective skills for re-framing, understanding system; self esteem; short and long term goal setting.)
- Are learner goals integrated into your curriculum? How? Do you get other learner input into the curriculum?
- Is your curriculum for the homeless different in any way from the one you use with other groups? How and why is it different?

- Does your curriculum specifically address the issue of homelessness or being homeless? If yes, how/why did you develop this curriculum. If no, why doesn't the curriculum address these issues?________________

- Do you think it is important to address gender, race, class. poverty, other social issues as part of your curriculum for the homeless?________________

- Have you developed a curriculum for any other group of people or any particular topic?________________

- Has your curriculum changed since you began your program? Please explain.

- Who develops materials for your program?________________

Successes/accomplishments________________

Problems/barriers________________

**E. Teacher/Tutor Training and Support (For Administrators and Teachers/Tutors)**

(The program fact sheet should give all information on composition of staff. If that information is incomplete, use this opportunity to complete it.)

Describe training programs and other means of support available to teachers and tutors, including group meetings, individual supervision, etc. especially on issues of homelessness and related concerns. ________________

Probe:

- What do you see as the teacher's/tutor's role(s) in the program?________________

- What general staff development/in service opportunities does agency offer and who has access to these?

•Does your agency offer specific training on homelessness? Describe it.

Successes/accomplishments

Problems/barriers

**F. Transition to Independent Use of Adult Education Services**

Is your program building in "transition" to a continued use of educational services by learners after they leave the shelter environment? If yes, please describe your transition plan. If no, why isn't there a transition plan?

Probe:

•What do you mean by "transition"?. How and when do you address this with the learners?

•Have you identified "transition information and skills" as part of the curriculum?

•To what extent does this-- or would you like it to--link with job training or jobs?

•Does the goal of transition influence other aspects of your program?

•If fact sheet does not have adequate documentation about use of community resources ask:

--Does your program have linkages with other adult education centers, training programs, local colleges, etc.?

--Is your agency involved in networking activities on issues of adult education, homelessness, other local issues? Does this influence what you do in the classroom?

Successes/accomplishments

Problems/barriers

**G. Internal Program Assessment**

- Please describe how you assess your program.

Probe:

- What do you look at?
- From whom do you solicit input?
- Do you make changes as a result of your program assessment procedures? If yes, describe them.

## IV. Program Partnership

Please discuss these issues candidly and fully.

- Is your partnership functioning as an advisory/decision making body? If yes, how, when, and coordinated by whom? If not, why not? Please describe.
- How well do you feel that you and your partner agency understand each other's organization? Purpose? Constraints?
- Are learners/guests considered part of your partnership? Are they members of your agency's governing board? Are they asked to participate in program planning?

•In your opinion, is the partnership between your collaborating agencies fulfilling the terms of its agreement? ______________________________

•What are the strategies your partnership has employed to insure the successful service delivery? Regular communication which is formal/informal, meetings, phone calls, trainings, other?______________________________

•What are the barriers to the optimum functioning of your partnership?

•Is there a mechanism by which your partnership specifically develops and evaluates program policy and practices? If yes, please describe the mechanism. If no, why is there no mechanism?______________________________

## V. Outcomes/Future Plans

•What program and learner outcomes did you anticipate when the program began? ______________________________

•Did partner agencies, teachers, learners have different outcomes in mind?___

•Are there other outcomes which you did not anticipate? Describe them and how/if you have integrated them into your program.

•Other outcome issues which you think are important to mention/discuss.

## VII. Recommended Changes for Next Year

•What are your recommended changes at the program level for next year? :

•What are your recommended changes for next year at the State level?-

• What kind(s) of technical assistance do you most urgently require?

**Other Comments**

# The Stone Center, Wellesley College
# Adult Education for the Homeless Pilot Project Evaluation:
# Individual Site Documentation--Overview 1990

## I. Purposes of the Site Visit/Documentation

A. To assemble and verify data/information pertaining to program planning, start-up and implementation

B. To examine program goals and objectives, activities, anticipated/unanticipated outcomes, barriers full program implementation and other organizational issues of particular concern to each program which are evidenced in program operations.

C. To use this information in writing a program profile and final report. The profile and report will assist program staff in assessing this year's program and identify directions for future growth and development.

New Programs will have a one day site visit; old programs will have a two day site visit. The schedules outlined below are intended only to give an idea of the sequence of interviews, group discussions, and observations which make up a site visit. The schedule for the site visit to your program will accomodate your program's schedule, the organization and staffing patterns of your agencies, and other individual program neeeds.

## II. Proposed Schedule for a One Day Site Visit to New Programs

**Day 1:**

9:00.....Interview(s) of Program Coordinator/Key Background Person(s)
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3:00.....Observation of Class(es)/Tutorial(s)
4:00.....Interview(s) with Teacher(s)/Tutor(s)
5:00.....Wrap-Up with Program Coordinator/Others

## III. Proposed Schedule for a Two Day Site Visit to Old Programs

**Day 1:**

9:00.....Interviews of Program Coordinator/Key Background Person(s)
12:00...Review of Written Materials/Tour of the Program/Shelter
1:00.....Working Lunch/Group Interview with Key Staff
2:30.....Individual Interviews with Key Staff, including Shelter and Learning Provider Staff
5:00.....Wrap-up Day 1

**Day 2**

9:00.....Interviews with Teacher(s)/Tutor(s)
11:00....Observation of Class(es)/Tutorial(s)
12:00....Lunch with Teachers/Learners
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## IV. Methodology

The combination of methods to be used during the site visit include:

A. Review of written materials, especially

- Proposals
- Memoranda of agreement
- Intake forms
- Curricula and other educational materials
- Monitoring forms/processes
- Minutes from key meetings
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- Student folders
- Other _____________

B. Interviews with administrative, teaching and support staff and adult learners in both a group and individual format

C. Observation (unobtrusive as possible) of classroom and other key activities

# The Stone Center Wellesley College
# Adult Education for the Homeless Pilot Project Evaluation: Individual Site Documentation -- Program Fact Sheet 1990

Please complete the Program Fact Sheet and send it to the Evaluator before your site visit. The information which you provide in the Program Fact Sheet will help the Evaluator to become familiar with your program and will save time and facilitate an easy flow of conversation and discussion on the day of the site visit. Please use additional paper if you need it to answer the questions fully.

**Program Name:**

______________________________________________

**Program Address:**

______________________________________________
______________________________________________
______________________________________________

**Program Partners:**
Learning Provider:______________________________
Shelter: ______________________________________
Other Partner(s):_______________________________
______________________________________________

**Contact Person(s):**

| | Name | Phone |
|---|---|---|
| Program Coordinator: | ____________________ | /____________ |
| Shelter Provider | ____________________ | /____________ |
| Learning Provider | ____________________ | /____________ |

**Program Start-Up Date:** ___________________________

**Current Phase of Development:** (Start-up; partial implementation; full implementation; other. Please explain.))

______________________________________________
______________________________________________
______________________________________________
______________________________________________
______________________________________________
______________________________________________
______________________________________________

**Major Program Goal(s):**

**Key Program Objectives(s):**

**Overall Program Design** (Basic Elements; Educational Emphasis, Exemplary Features)

**Overall Program Philosophy** (Key Beliefs; Approach to Service Delivery; etc.)

**Target Population(s):**
(Do you target any particular population, for example, families, youth, single people, etc.? Please describe your target population and their particular need for education services)

**Learner Data:**
(Do you collect information on each of the following? If yes, please summarize your learner data for each item. If no, please let us know why you do not have data. For example: "This is not important to our program", "This is important but we haven't gotten around to collecting this data yet", etc.)

- Gender (Numbers of women/men)
- Race and Ethnicity (Numbers of: Black, White, Hispanic, Asian, Native American and Other People--specify others if you serve a particular group not listed here)
- Age (under 20; 20 to 30; 31to 40; 41 to 50; 51 to 60; over 60)
- Attendance in class/tutorial: (Do you record attendance rates? How is attendance?)

•Length of stay in education program: (How long are your learners staying in your program?)__________

•Rate of return to education program: (Do learners leave and then return?)__________

•Numbers and types of referrals made to other agencies/services:__________

•Follow-up contacts:__________

•Numbers of learners who have completed program (Please explain what your program means by completion)__________

**Program Schedule**:

•Actual hours per day/per week of services offered. (Note days and hours)

1. Instruction__________
2. Counselling__________
3. Training__________
4. Group meetings__________
5. Other__________

•Preferred/ideal amount of time per day/week/cyle of instruction__________

**Administrative and Personnel Structure** (Brief description of roles, responsibilities, age, race/ethnicity, gender, languages spoken and experience working with homeless people)

•Administrators: (Program Director, Coordinator, Other)

•Teachers: (Please include wages, if benefits are offered, if prep time is paid or unpaid)

•Counsellors:

•Others:

**Relationship of Program to Larger Community and Resources** (Please include, if possible, a general description of: the resource(s); the quality of the resource(s); the availability and frequency of use; and how--if at all--each of the community resources translates into direct support for the program.)

**Consideration of Special Populations and Special Issues** (Does your program pay special attention to any of the following populations and/or issues? Please explain.)

- Women (e.g., parenting,; discrimination, etc):

- Racial or Ethnic Groups (e.g., awareness of cultural differences, discrimination, etc.):

- Physically challenged (e.g., pyhsical access, discrimination, etc.)

- Other:

## FOR OLD PROGRAMS ONLY

Please identify and describe the four most important issues/concerns in your adult education for the homeless program which you would like the evaluator to pay special attention to during the course of the site visit. Your full explanation of these issues on the program fact sheet will assist the evaluator in planning the site visit as well as the focus of the interview questions and the program observations.

1.)________________________________________

2.)________________________________________

3.)

4)

# The Stone Center Wellesley College
# Adult Education for the Homeless Project Evaluation
# Individual Site Documentation -- For Use by Evaluation Staff
# 1990

**(General Instruction: Use the information submitted on the program fact sheets to probe specific interests and concerns of each program)**

## I. History/Background

**A. When/how/why did you and your agency become involved in adult education for the homeless?** (Probe: Is this the first time you and your agency have been involved in this kind of program; any expectations for the challenges this kind of project might pose)____________________

**B. What are your most important program and learner goals and objectives?** (Allow one or more open-ended answers and then probe for goals regarding **partnership**, **curriculum**, and **transition**. For each goal described, ask if there have been any changes in focus or definition since program began. If yes, ask what are the changes and why were they initiated. )

- Open ended answer #1____________________

- Open ended answer #2____________________

- Partnership____________________

- Curriculum

- Transition

**C. Is there a mesh between your goals, the goals of your partner agencies and between your partnership and the State oversight agency, or are there differences?**

## II. Coordination of Services

Please describe in detail the following aspects of your program and discuss 1.) any significant accomplishments/successes achieved thus far and 2.) any problems/barriers encountered in implementing your program objectives.

**A. Educational Services: (For Administrators and Teachers/Tutors)** (Ask: Which services do you offer? Are these the categories you use to describe your services or do you describe your services differently?)

- **ABE** (Probe: What does your program mean by ABE? What skills do you include in it? Reading, writing, life skills, goal setting, group skills, self esteem, etc.)

Successes/accomplishments

Problems/barriers

•**GED** (Probe: What does your program mean by GED? What skills do you include in it? Reading, writing, life skills, goal setting, group skills, self esteem, test taking, etc.)

Successes/accomplishments____________________

Problems/barriers____________________

•**ESL** (Probe: What does your program mean by ESL? What skills do you include in it? Reading, writing, American life skills, goal setting, group skills, self esteem, etc.)

Successes/accomplishments____________________

Problems/barriers____________________

•**Parenting Skills Classes** (Probe: What does your program mean by Parenting skills? What skills do you include in it? Reading, writing, family life skills, goal setting, group skills, self esteem, etc.)____________________

Successes/accomplishments____________________

Problems/barriers____________________

•**Prevocational Training** (Probe: What does your program mean by prevocational training? What skills do you include in it?)____________________

Successes/accomplishments______________________________

______________________________

______________________________

Problems/barriers______________________________

______________________________

______________________________

•**Other** (Specify and then probe: What does your program mean by _______? What skills do you include in it? Reading, writing, life skills, goals setting, group skills, self esteem, etc.)______________________________

______________________________

______________________________

______________________________

______________________________

Successes/accomplishments______________________________

______________________________

______________________________

Problems/barriers______________________________

______________________________

______________________________

**B. Support Services** (Probe: Which support services do you offer? Are these the categories you use to describe your services or do you describe your services differently? Which are the most important for access to/participation in your program, and how do you assess this?)

•**Daycare** (Describe services, location, hours, utilization, etc.)____________

______________________________

______________________________

______________________________

______________________________

______________________________

Successes/accomplishments______________________________

______________________________

______________________________

Problems/barriers______________________________

______________________________

______________________________

•**Counseling** (Specify kind of counseling, e.g., educational, other)________

______________________________

______________________________

______________________________

______________________________

Successes/accomplishments______________________________

______________________________

______________________________

Problems/barriers______________________________

______________________________

______________________________

•**Transportation** (Specify kind of transportation, utilization, etc.)

Successes/accomplishments

Problems/barriers

•**Other** (Specify other kind of support service)

Successes/accomplishments

Problems/barriers

## III. Program Components

**A. Recruitment and Retention of Learners** (Describe your overall recruitment and /retention strategies.and your overall successes and problems)

Successes/accomplishments

Problems/barriers

Probe: 1.) How is eligibility for your program determined?

Probe: 2.) Which group(s) do you target? Are you recruiting them?

Probe: 3.) Any new outreach to people not yet served? Any street outreach?

Probe: 4.) How does your program assure access to physically or mentally challenged people? To linguistic minorities?

Probe: 5.) What percentage of your contacts do you not enroll? Why do you think this happens and do you have a way to find out more about why?

Probe: 6.) What is your retention rate? Do you know why people drop out? Have you had any re-enrollments?

**B. Assessment of Learners (For Administrators and Teachers/Tutors)**

- **Educational Assessment** (Describe your assessment tools and approaches for pre, during, and post enrollment. Include standardized and other tests, intakes, interviews, observations, etc.)

Successes/accomplishments

Problems/barriers

- **Other Areas of Assessment** (What other areas do you think are important to assess as measures of learner and program success? For example, increased self confidence; increased social skills like keeping appointments or initiating discussions in class; expressing desire to continue participation in educational program,etc.)

How would you/do you go about measuring changes in those areas?

**C. Creating an Adult Learning Environment/Teaching Methods (For Administrators and Teachers/Tutors)**

(Describe classroom/tutorial space, efforts to create congenial environment; and all methods used to insure interest and participation of learners.)

Probe specifically for:

- Peer tutoring or any other way of developing peer support and assistance?
- Group learning. Does your program use group learning Why or why not?
- Group identification. Does your program foster a sense of group identification around homelessness, single parenting, etc.?
- Dealing with strong emotions in the classroom. Is this a concern? If yes, how do you deal with it?

Successes/accomplishments

Problems/barriers

**D. Selecting/Designing Curriculum (For Administrators and Teachers/Tutors)**

What curriculum do you use?

- What kinds of learning goals does your curriculum address? (Probe: What framework, philosophy of education, values, etc. this reflects including functional reading, writing, life skills; interactive skills at the individual and "working the system" level; critical/reflective skills for re-framing, understanding system; self esteem; short and long term goal setting.)
- Are learner goals integrated into your curriculum? How? Do you get other learner input into the curriculum?
- Is your curriculum for the homeless different in any way from the one you use with other groups? How and why is it different?

•Does your curriculum specifically address the issue of homelessness or being homeless? If yes, how/why did you develop this curriculum. If no, why doesn't the curriculum address these issues?

•Do you think it is important to address gender, race, class. poverty, other social issues as part of your curriculum for the homeless?

•Have you developed a curriculum for any other group of people or any particular topic?

•Has your curriculum changed since you began your program? Please explain.

•Who develops materials for your program?

Successes/accomplishments

Problems/barriers

## E. Teacher/Tutor Training and Support (For Administrators and Teachers/Tutors)

(The program fact sheet should give all information on composition of staff. If that information is incomplete, use this opportunity to complete it.)
Describe training programs and other means of support available to teachers and tutors, including group meetings, individual supervision, etc. especially on issues of homelessness and related concerns.

Probe:
•What do you see as the teacher's/tutor's role(s) in the program?

•What general staff development/in service opportunities does agency offer and who has access to these?

•Does your agency offer specific training on homelessness? Describe it.

Successes/accomplishments

Problems/barriers

**F. Transition to Independent Use of Adult Education Services**
Is your program building in "transition" to a continued use of educational services by learners after they leave the shelter environment? If yes, please describe your transition plan. If no, why isn't there a transition plan?

Probe:
•What do you mean by "transition"?. How and when do you address this with the learners?

•Have you identified "transition information and skills" as part of the curriculum?

•To what extent does this-- or would you like it to--link with job training or jobs?

•Does the goal of transition influence other aspects of your program?

•If fact sheet does not have adequate documentation about use of community resources ask:
--Does your program have linkages with other adult education centers, training programs, local colleges, etc.?

--Is your agency involved in networking activities on issues of adult education, homelessness, other local issues? Does this influence what you do in the classroom?

Successes/accomplishments

Problems/barriers

### G. Internal Program Assessment

- Please describe how you assess your program.

Probe:

- What do you look at?
- From whom do you solicit input?
- Do you make changes as a result of your program assessment procedures? If yes, describe them.

## IV. Program Partnership

Please discuss these issues candidly and fully.

- Is your partnership functioning as an advisory/decision making body? If yes, how, when, and coordinated by whom? If not, why not? Please describe.
- How well do you feel that you and your partner agency understand each other's organization? Purpose? Constraints?
- Are learners/guests considered part of your partnership? Are they members of your agency's governing board? Are they asked to participate in program planning?

- In your opinion, is the partnership between your collaborating agencies fulfilling the terms of its agreement?

- What are the strategies your partnership has employed to insure the successful service delivery? Regular communication which is formal/informal, meetings, phone calls, trainings, other?

- What are the barriers to the optimum functioning of your partnership?

- Is there a mechanism by which your partnership specifically develops and evaluates program policy and practices? If yes, please describe the mechanism. If no, why is there no mechanism?

## V. Outcomes/Future Plans

- What program and learner outcomes did you anticipate when the program began?

- Did partner agencies, teachers, learners have different outcomes in mind?

•Are there other outcomes which you did not anticipate? Describe them and how/if you have integrated them into your program.

•Other outcome issues which you think are important to mention/discuss.

## VII. Recommended Changes for Next Year

•What are your recommended changes at the program level for next year? :

•What are your recommended changes for next year at the State level?-

• What kind(s) of technical assistance do you most urgently require?

**Other Comments**